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Summary: The year is 2016, and the town of Flagstaff Arizona has been experiencing a rash of disappearances, kids, teenagers, and young adults alike. Having left Derry after the "Losers Club" had beaten him back, Pennywise finds itself a new hunting ground, but finds something much more than it had bargained for.

1. Chapter 1

Author note: This story was inspired by Stephen King's "IT" This particular Pennywise is based off of the 2017 Bill Skarsgard portrayal. This story takes place in the year 2016, in an Alternate Universe where Pennywise left the town of Derry after the events of 1989, where the Losers Club had pushed him back into hibernation early. As a WARNING: This story contains Extreme Violence, Sexual Violence, Disturbing Imagery, and Sexually explicit content. Despite "Labeling" this is not a romance story, it is meant to be disturbing and uncomfortable to read, while enthralling enough to keep you all interested. This type of story is not for everyone so please, consider these things before you continue reading. Thank you very Much.

April 2016; Flagstaff Arizona

The summer rains had hit Flagstaff hard this year, but that did not deter thirteen year old Patrick Levins from going out with his friends. Water splashed up onto his legs as his skate board drove through a large puddle as he turned the corner from Sixth to Izabel Street. The skatepark wasn't the greatest, but it was the only one within a reasonable distance to his house. The group of three teenagers rolled up next to the gate, picking up their boards as Patrick unhooked the latch on the gate and pushed it open, the wet iron making a dull creaking sound.

"Hey Pat, do you really think we should be here? I mean....it's already getting pretty late and that curfew...." Jose Masters asked, looking around at the quiet neighborhood, the heavy gray clouds making it seem like the sun was setting early.

"Oh PLEASE!" The exasperated voice of Lillian popped up. "That's mostly for little kids! Besides it's only five, we got two hours before the curfew anyway! Don't be such a sissy!"

Jose sighed and rolled his eyes as he shook his head as he followed Patrick into the park.

"She's right, Jose. We got a few hours, and it's not like we're here

alone or anything! We'll be fine!" Patrick spoke up, plopping his backpack down onto the picnic bench set under an overhang. "We'll just hang out and skate for an hour or two and then we'll head on home! "

"All right all right!" Jose said, throwing his own bag down next to Patrick's. "It's just that my mom will have a fit if we stay out too long."

"You'r Mom needs to learn that you are more than capable of taking care of yourself!" Lillian said before hopping onto her board and rolling down into the bowl. The boys laughed and went to follow her.

The three of them spent the next hour skating in the rain, constantly trying to outdo each other with their tricks. As Six-thirty started to come around, Patrick looked up to see a black and white police car pull up next to the gate. He sighed and kicked his board up into his hand as a woman in blue uniform got out of the car and made her way towards the gate.

"Hey there!" The officer called out to them. "You three know what time it is right? Curfew is in about half an hour, you should be heading on home now!"

"We know!" Patrick called back as Lillian and Jose came up beside him. "We were just about to head home!"

"All right then. Stick together you three, we don't need any more disappearances." The cop tilted her cap before returning to her car and slowly driving away to continue her neighborhood patrol.

Patrick turned to the other two and shrugged. Letting his board fall back onto the pavement as he grabbed his bag.

"Guess we should be heading on home then..." He sighed as Jose nodded anxiously. He had been acting antsy for a while now.

Jose hadn't wanted to say anything but he had been feeling uneasy for the last hour, constantly looking around him to check to see if someone was watching them. He hadn't seen anything, only a feeling.

Lillian scoffed at the two boys and shook her head, her hair looking

nearly black because of the rain.

"Honestly you two are so fucking soft." She said as she turned to return to the bowl.

"Lilly, you'll get in trouble if you're caught outside after curfew..." Jose said, making sure his bag was securely on his back. "Be sides...we were told to stay together...."

"Well I don't care." the young girl said as she prepared to continue skating. "What kind of trouble, anyway? You really think my Dad gives two shits if I'm home late? He doesn't even notice when I AM home, let alone when I'm not. Besides, why the fuck should I have to listen to some uniformed bitch? Does she think I can't take care of myself. You two go. I'm staying." And she leaned forward on her board, rolling down into the bowl. Patrick and Jose looked at each other before shaking their heads and turning to leave the park, passing through the gate and making their way back down the street.

"All right, Lilly! We'll see you at school!" Patrick called out as he turned the corner and began to make his way down sixth street.

Lilly popped up onto the rim and waved at the two of them as they left, before turning and continuing to practice how to blunt a Fakie. However as she was getting ready to Ollie and go back down the ramp, her wheels lost traction on the wet pavement, causing the board to slip out from under her, sending her tumbling down into the bowl.

As she finally stopped sliding, her board rolled down the ramp, slamming into her skinned up shin, causing her to call out in a brief moment of sharp pain.

"Owww...." She moaned, sitting up and looking at the blood on her hands, arms, and legs. She sat there shaking for a moment before reaching into her pocket to pull out her phone when a sudden, cracked, squeaky voice came to her ears.

"My my, that was a nasty fall you took there Lills!" Lilly turned her head up, and at the top of the wrap was sitting....a Clown?

Large blue eyes were staring at her, buck-teeth grinning at her past bright red lips that were painted into a smile that when all the way past his eyes, nearly to the crop of bright red hair. His silver, ruffled suit with red buttons shining slightly in the rain and lamplight. In his hand was a cluster of red balloons.

The clown smiled down at Lillian, tilting his head ever so slightly.

"Yes, a Nasty fall indeed. Would you like some help?"

Lilly stared at him, severely off put due to the painted on smile and, ewww, was that drool? Gross! She shook her head and tried to get to her feet, despite how badly her legs were hurting.

"Er....no...I'm fine, I'll call for my brother to come pick me up...." She said, keeping her eye on the clown.

"Your brother?" The clown asked, "And he's not with you now? You know kids have been disappearing right?"

"Yea....I was here with some friends but they had to leave...." She said, leaning against the ramp wall as she bent to pick up her skateboard.

"Well...." The clown stated swallowing and quickly licking his lips, trying to get rid of that drool she suspected, "While you wait for your brother I'll stay here. It's not safe for you to be alone...." And with that he stood up and slid down the bowl, landing on his tippy toes like a dancer, small bells hidden on his suit jingling at the movement.

"Er...okay, thanks, I guess...:Lilly stated, instinctively leaning away from the strange man, who she now noticed was shockingly tall, with long skinny legs and arms.

He smiled at her before making a small gasp, and slapping his forehead in an overly-dramatic way.

"Tsk tsK tsK, where are my manners! No wonder you're so cautious, I never introduced myself!" He said before making a small bow, his arms firmly at his side. "My name is Pennywise, the Dancing Clown!" He said, shaking slightly, making the bells jingle again as he said the word 'Dancing'. Lilly couldn't help but give a wry smile at the clown.

The guy certainly seemed to enjoy his job, which was a little creepy but so far, harmless.

Pennywise took a step towards Lilly and pulled one of the balloons away from the rest of the bundle and held it out towards the girl.

"Would you like a balloon?" He asked and Lilly laughed before shrugging and reaching out to take the balloon. As her hand reached out, she didn't notice as blue eyes turned to a bright yellow, following her movements. Lilly took the balloon and pulled it back towards herself. As she looked back at the clown she was taken aback by his eyes, still blue to her, but one of them seems to have drifted off to look in a different direction. She swallowed and took another step away before Pennywise cleared his throat.

"You should be careful, Lilly, being in this park. There are a bunch of snakes around this area..."

She stopped, her eyes going wide as her bloody hand clenched the string of the balloon.

"S....snakes?" She said, her voice trembling slightly. She hated, HATED snakes so much. Even those small water snakes that couldn't hurt you! They were just so Creepy!

"Yes, yes snakes....." Pennywise said slowly, his creaking voice taking on a sound that bordered on a growl. "Like that one." He said, one eye looking at her hand.

Lilly suddenly felt the balloon go heavy, the string turning thick and cold, and starting to move. She turned her eyes towards it to see a bright green snake in her hand, yellow eyes staring angrily at her as it opened its mouth to hiss, two long fangs glistening.

Letting out a loud screech, she practically threw the snake onto the ground, turning and backing away from the wall of the ramp, her back running right into a hard, silver-silk covered chest. She heard a deep, animalistic growl come from behind and above her. Shaking she looked directly above her head, to see those yellow eyes, and rows of sharp teeth peeking out from behind a red smile.

Less than ten minutes later, the police had tapped off the skate park, and were searching the area for any indication for where Lillian Mars may have gone after the reports of screaming had come in from the nearby apartment building. After several hours of searching the park, they recovered her board, her bag, and one leg, found near a drainage tunnel.

2. Chapter 2

Graduation Day

May 2016, Flagstaff Arizona

Maria found herself begrudging the summer heat, even as the sun was setting on her outdoor High School graduation ceremony. Sitting in one of those metal folding chairs, wearing a heavy, satin graduation gown that was too big for her, her thick, dusty brown hair tied back into a tight braid starting from just below her cap. Sweat was getting in her eyes, causing her to rub at them constantly, careful not to dislodge her single contact lens.

She didn't really need it, it's not like she had bad eyesight or anything, but her complete heterochromia had caused her enough trouble in grade school, that she had started to wear a single contact lens over her green eye to make it match with her brown eye. But soon any of those worries should be behind her. She was eighteen and graduating from Coconino High School. Soon she would be going to NAU and begin studying medicine. A state university is no Med-school, but it was a step, get at least some of her schooling out of the way while she works and saves money to go to a specialist college.

So absorbed in her thoughts of the future, she was mildly shocked when the other students around her started to stand in preparation to get their diplomas. Maria sighed and stood with them, shuffling to get into the carefully planned alphabetical line as she waited for her name to be called.

This ceremony had already been going on far too long, for her liking, but it was nearly done. Once the rolled up papers were handed out, a photo was taken, and hats thrown, it would be over with, and Maria would no longer have to deal with Highschool life.

"David Greene!" Applause as the tall boy with blonde hair made his way to the small stage. He took the paper from the principle, shook his hand and smiled for a photo, before hopping off the stage. David was one of the schools biggest jocks. Surprisingly, however, he was a part of the soccer team, not football, which actually made him a

much more bearable guy, way more humble. Unfortunately media has ingrained into people that boys who play football need to be total dicks, and the team at this school played that part perfectly. However, it must be a hit to the ego that the golee for the soccer team was the one who got the full-ride sports scholarship instead of the football quarterback. Nice to see stereotypes kicked in the face with a cleet.

"Patricia Harris!"

Talk about a stereotype. Patricia was that "Mean girl cheerleader" that is supposed to exist in every high school in the world. Luckily, most of the cheerleader stereotypes were avoided in Coconino, the majority of them being fairly decent people who just had way too much energy for Maria's taste. Patricia, on the other hand, was the queen of all bitches. She had all the points checked off. Loaded Father, waif Mother, newest phone, shoes, car, clothes, etc. Had breast implants at the age of 16, died her hair barbie blonde, and always wore the most obnoxious shades of pink lipgloss. Maria had to wonder how someone like this could ACTUALLY exist outside of television shows, despite the fact that she has seen it first hand for the last four years. It was baffling. Maria rolled her eyes and sighed as the petite blonde skipped onto the stage, took her photo, and winked and waved to the whole football field, as if she was the star of a play. If luck was on Maria's side, Patricia would be going down to the Valley for college, or not going for a higher education at all. But, luck was rarely on her side.

A few more names were called, "Matt Iris, Ruth Ister, Kaylin June, George Key,..." One after one the class of 2016 was walking up and taking their pictures before making their way to a set of bleachers and sitting down next to friends, getting ready for the big group photo and cap toss that would end this circus.

"Maria Reigns!" Finally! Maria made her way up to the stage, having to pick up her gown as she walked up the stairs. The Principle of the school gave her a slightly disapproving look before handing her the ribbon bound scroll and shaking her hand. Maria turned to the camera and gave the best fake smile she could muster. Once the photo was taken she carefully made her way down the other side of the stage and to the metal bleachers, taking a seat on the lowest rung,

in an attempt not to get completely surrounded by this mass of sweaty teenagers.

As she sat down she looked around at the crowd of parents, siblings, and friends in the stands, hoping to pinpoint her father. It was hard to see because of lights, but even so, she doubted he would be there. The man had a tendency to forget things, even his only child's graduation ceremony. While Maria actually had a very very good memory, for example in that moment she was still able to remember the time her father forgot to pick her up after school in the second grade, and a cop ended having to take her home when he found her sitting alone in the school parking lot nearly four hours after school got out.

Letting out a sigh, Maria gave up on trying to find her father, instead picking out faces she recognised. Allot of them she knew better than she had hopped. Parents of children who should have been walking in today's ceremony, sitting in the front row, looking through all of the gown-wearing students, in vain hope that they would see their baby. Over twelve people had gone missing in the last four months, ranging from the ages of ten to twenty. Apparently the FBI had been called in to try and help, but so far nothing had been found save for a few small belongings...and limbs.

She had to turn away from them. Maria couldn't look at their faces, so scared, sad and hopeful all at the same time. Maria suspected they were all dead at this point. What do they say, that the first forty-eight hours are the most crucial for finding a kidnapped victim alive? It had been four days since the last disappearance. Maria rubbed her hands over her face, glad that she hadn't tried to bother with makeup today, and sighed, wanting to go home and go to bed. Folding her hands together and pressing them against her mouth she looked straight ahead, hoping to find something to catch her interest as more and more students were called up and given diplomas. And, lucky her, something very interesting ended up catching her eye.

On the far end of the field she could see a large bundle of red balloons, well over a dozen or up and blinking past the lights, Maria tried to focus on them more, to see if they were just tied there or....no. Someone was holding them. There was...a clown in a silver suit just standing there, with a bunch of balloons. Had someone hired

a clown for graduation? That seemed a little weird, considering they were hardly little kids. But something else was off. The clown seemed to be staring, right at Maria. Or so it felt. Intense eyes seemed to boor right into her as one gloved hand raised and started to wave. Maria frowned in confusion before giving a small wave back, which seemed to delight the man in white face paint.

"Hey!"

Maria thought she had leapt ten feet into the air when she heard the familiar voice speak from right beside her. She turned to look at the wide grin and messy red hair of Charles Tristeron, the only person Maria could confidently call a friend. His bright green eyes and freckles gave him a permanent youthfulness, even if he was already over six feet tall. However as of right now he seemed confused and amused by her reaction to him.

"Whoa...didn't mean to scare ya!" He said with a laugh. "What're you doing spacing out during graduation anyway?!"

"Oh, sorry....I was just looking at that Clown..." She replied turning to motion to the man with the balloons, but he was gone. She blinked and looked around, craning her neck to see if she could spot that big bundle of red again.

"A clown?" Charlie said, looking the general direction Maria was. "Come on Mar, is not very nice to call Jason a clown!" She said, slapping her on the back with a laugh, clearly thinking she had meant it as an insult to the kid currently on his way to get his diploma.

"No....A clown, like with a big grin and a red nose. He was over there, by the entrance." She said pointing to where she had seen him. Charlie shrugged and shook his head, fiddling with the paper in his hands.

"So what? Someone probably just hired him for the kids who came to watch their big siblings graduate. It's not important, what IS important is the fact that we are almost out of this fucking hell hole!"

Maria had to laugh, shrugging and nodding in agreement. He was right. Now wasn't the time to be wandering about some weird clown, they were about to move on past high school, have a nice long summer, before going off to college, really starting their lives in earnest from here on out. She bumped her shoulder against Charlie's and he laughed, putting an arm around her shoulder for a tight, friendly hug.

The two of them sat and chatted, applauding with everyone else as name after name was called until finally the last student, the poor girl, was called, photographed, and made her way to the bleachers with everyone else. Despite Maria's efforts, she still felt horribly claustrophobic being surrounded by so many students in such a small space, those big gowns not helping to alleviate any of it. Carlie and Maria put their arms over each other's shoulder and gave each other a wry grin as the photographer prepared his camera.

"You ready to be free?" Charlie asked, having to practically yell over the noise of the other students.

"Hell yeah!" Maria replied, laughing.

"All right! On the count of three everyone yell 'Class of 2016!' " The photographer said with a grin. Maria, along with everyone else, all stood up, taking off their caps to be ready to toss them up into the air. She turned and gave Charlie one more big smile before looking back towards the camera, the photographer, and once again that big bundle of balloons, only now it was closer, much closer. The clown was standing right behind the photographer, standing at what looked like nearly seven feet tall. He was giving her a big, buck-toothed grin, bright yellow eyes staring right at her, no mistake. Maria blinked, wondering how he had gotten there so quickly, and why no one else, not even Charlie seemed to notice him.

"Okay, One, Two, THREE!" The photographer called and all the caps around Maria went flying upwards into the air as nearly one hundred students all called at once. "Class of Twenty Sixteen!"

Maria had not taken her eyes off the clown, had not called out the phrase or tossed her cap. She just stared as if transfixed, before a single cap passed into her line of vision, obscuring the clown, and

then falling passed. Leaving nothing but a single balloon were the silver clown had stood.

3. Chapter 3

Authors Note: Thank you everyone who has read what I have so far. This is a somewhat smaller chapter but I am hoping to be updating this story fairly regularly, at least a couple chapters a week for a while, unless work gets too hard. If you are enjoying please feel free to leave a review! Thank you!

Brittany Asters and Mateo Florez

The night of graduation had been a blast for the majority of the students at Coconino High school, including Brittany Asters. After the big photo was taken the crowd of young adults all split apart and went running to find their parents, to get hugs, kisses, flowers, stuffed animals, and so on. Brittany was no different, booking it on her tiny legs towards her father, leaping into his arms with a joyous cry of pure happiness. The tall man, who was at that point in his mid forties, squeezed her so tightly she thought her eyes were going to pop out of her head.

"I'm so proud of you, baby doll!" He said, as he hugged her, Brittany could see that his eyes were shining with tears that were damn near flooding out. She gave him another hug, long, white, ropy arms wrapped around his shoulders. Her father had always been her foundation, her grounding pole throughout her adolescence. Graduating had hit home the fact that soon she would be leaving, living in a dorm with strangers rather than with her Father and little brother.

Eventually pulling away from the hug, Brittany turned to look at the other students, hoping to find the ones she knew so she could talk to them, feeling like she had to get all of her words out at once, before they ended up being lost to time forever. Luckily she was able to catch sight of Maria and Charles, both of them talking to Mr and Ms. Tristerson, Charlie's parents. Maria had already unzipped her graduation gown was basically just wearing it as a coat over her purple tank-top and jeans. Brittany could never fully understand the girl, why she never wore makeup or dressed up, even for graduation! But that wasn't really that important, in the long run, Brittany knew that Maria was really smart, smarter than those boys in the chess

club. She was top of her class, a straight A student, and apparently also knew how to hunt, camp, and flyfish! But...Brittany figured that most the people in Flagstaff probably knew those things, what with it being a very woodsy town, and having come from Phoenix, Brit knew for a fact that she probably came off as being very "City girl" but that was fine.

She was about to start her analysing on Charlie when two arms wrapped themselves around her from behind, causing her to squeal as her boyfriend, Mateo, lifted her up into a big hug. She laughed, willing her little heart to stop beating so damn fast, turning to give him a peck on the cheek as he set her down on the grass. Mateo was a very handsome young man, looking older than he was with his thick dark hair, square jaw, and almond eyes. He looked like he could be a football player, with his muscular build, but that had come from hard work in his younger days, working on a ranch outside of town with his dad and grandfather ever since he was ten. Brittany loved that about him though. Big strong guy, who loved horses and was a total sweetheart, especially to her.

"Congratulations, Mateo!" Brittany's father said, shaking the young man's hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Asters." He said with a bright smile, god he had a beautiful smile. "Brittany was a huge help. I don't think I would have graduated without her helping me study last semester..."

Brittany blushed lightly, tucking her hair behind her ear. It's true she had helped him in the library a few times, but she really didn't think she deserved that kind of credit. He was smarter than he gave himself credit for. She looked up to her dad who gave them both a kind, knowing smile.

"Well you two go and have a chat with your friends. I need to get billy home and in bed, but he wanted to stay to see the hats fly." He said with a chuckle, looking at the eight year old boy who was currently talking his his own friends who had come to see their older siblings walk. "How late will this party you're going to run?"

"It'll be over by midnight, Daddy." She said and immediately noticed the look of concern on her father's face. She sighed. "Dad, I'm

eighteen, and it's not like I'm gonna be alone. We'll be sticking together."

Mr. Asters sighed and nodded, patting his little girl on the shoulder.

"I know that sweetpea. It's just....with all those people going missing, I'm worried about you two. Just....promise me you'll be careful, okay?"

"I promise." She said with a big grin. Her father nodded and gave her a kiss on the cheek, and shook Mateo's hand one more time before going to get Billy and take him home. Brittany watched as her father and little brother made their way out of the stadium, allong with several families who were on their way to go have their own celebrations. Brittany took Mateo's hand in her own and smiled up at him.

"You okay, Brit?" He asked, pushing her hair back, it always seemed to fall into her face. She sighed and nodded, leaning against his chest.

"Yeah, I'm good. Just.....it's a bit shocking is all, but I'll be okay." She gave a big grin before turning to see if she could spot Maria and Charlie again, and sure enough, there they were. Ugh! Apparently Patricia couldn't leave them alone, even on graduation. Seriously did that girl think everyone cared about her opinion as much as she did?

Brittany looked up at Mateo, who had also noticed the scene, and they started to make their way towards the group.

"Honestly , Maria, have some pride! You COULD have at least tried to look decent for graduation!" Patricia's voice was shrill in Brittany's ears, and had to have been even worse for Maria, who was much closer to the source. But Brittany had to give it to the girl, Maria looked down right bored by the scenario. Most would be yelling back or simply walked away, but Maria was just staring at her like she was some annoying kid in a grocery store.

"I think she looks fine." Brittany said loud enough for the group to hear. "Not everyone likes dresses and heels, Patty, she looks fine."

Patricia turned to Brittany, her nose wrinkled up in snear.

"Don't call me that." Patricia spat, looking outright furious. The good thing about having once been her friend, Brittany knew all the right buttons to push, and that made her smile.

"Why not?" Charlie said with a grin. "You could be Patty Patticake! You could go join that Clown Maria saw. You certainly wear enough makeup for it."

Charlie laughed at his own joke, as one does, but Brittany was confused, looking at Maria who was now looking behind her, a very concerned look in her eyes. Something seemed off. Brittany reached out and put a hand on the taller girl's shoulder, drawing her attention.

"You okay?" She asked, concerned. Maybe Maria didn't like clowns?

"Yeah....yeah I'm fine." Maria said, forcing a smile. "It's nothing. So...Charlie, any chance I could get a ride home from ya?"

Patricia, who had been scowling from Charlie's comment, made a legitimate frown of confusion.

"You aren't going to the party?" She asked, folding her arms over her chest. Maria shook her head. Brittany wasn't surprised. Anyone who knew Maria knew she hated crowds, one reason why she was never a part of the big events, like Prom or homecoming.

"I gotta get home." Maria said simply before looking back to Charlie. "So about that ride?"

"Yeah, I'll drop you off." Charlie said, scratching the back of his head. "Lemme go tell my parents that I'll be home late and then I'll be ready to go." Maria nodded and they all watched as Charlie ran off to go talk to his parents. Patricia scoffed and turned away from the other three, trying to march away in pumps, on grass. Maria and Brittany both ended up getting one hell of a laugh out of watching her stumble as her heels sank into the dirt.

"I wish you would come to the party, Maria." Brittany said quietly. "We never got to hang out much, so...I was hoping to spend more time with you before going off to College."

Maria shrugged, turning to look at Brittany.

"I mean, we got pretty much all summer, right? Besides, I think we're both going to NAU right? We'll see each other around." She gave another small smile before looking back up at where Charlie was waving at her. "I gotta get going. You two enjoy the party."

Brittany and Mateo both wished Maria good night before making their own way to Mateo's car, both of them taking off their graduation robes and tossing them in the back seat. Once inside, Brittany could feel his hand brush her hair over her shoulder. She turned to look at him and turned right into a kiss. She smiled against his lips and kissed him back, feeling that familiar heat that always started to build in her gut.

The kiss lasted much longer than he had intended, and by the time he pulled away they were both breathing hard, he could see that her lips were pink and swollen from the force of it. That small part of him wanted to forget about the party and instead take her back to his house, but he knew it would never happen. The Celibacy ring on her finger meant much more to her than it did to most people. But that was okay. He found her dedication and respect for her own body to be something worth admiring, even it was rather frustrating to his own. So he gave her another peck on the lips before turning and starting up his car.

The drive to the party was not too far, luckily. They had rented out what was practically a ballroom in the 1895 Bar and Grill, a nice place, that seemed to fit into the style of Flagstaff all too well. The streets downtown were still bustling with activity, not to surprising for a college town, but the sun had set behind those familiar gray clouds that had been hanging over Flagstaff all summer so far. Mateo couldn't help but feel as if every new disappearance leant to the dark skies. As if...each time another person vanished, another cloud would form.

Mateo had to shake those thoughts out of his head, this wasn't the time to be thinking about people disappearing or the shitty weather, they had just graduated High school! Now should be a time for fun! And so, fun is what he was determined to have. As the two of them pulled into the parking lot, the only parking spot was one of those

parallel spots that always seemed to be such a pain to get into. He sighed and pulled forward before switching into reverse and trying to pull into the space that he swore was way too small for a standard car.

It took a couple of minutes of going back and forth, but eventually he was able to park the car fairly straight and turned off the engine. As Brittany started to get out of the car, Mateo took a moment to adjust his mirrors, as he always did, making sure his sideview and rearview were properly adjusted, as they had a tendency to jostle out of place while driving.

As he reached up to adjust the rearview mirror he frowned at the reflection inside of it. He turned to look over his shoulder and....nothing? He sat straight again and frowned up into the mirror, wandering what weird lighting could have caused that illusion. For a moment he thought he had seen something moving in his back seat, something with yellow eyes.

A tap on the window caused him to jump as Brittany waved at him to get out of the car. He sighed and shook his head. Whatever it was, had obviously been a trick of the mind or something, so he got out of the car and pushed the door closed with his foot, making sure to lock it as they started to make their way into the restaurant.

4. Chapter 4

New Home

Flagstaff was a very different town from Derry, Pennywise had learned quickly. Without having been under his influence for a long time, the people here were much more protective of their children, and much more aware of strange things happening. Of course, he still had his defenses, being visible only to those few people he wanted to see him. The Sewers here were also much better kept, making it far more difficult for him to feast in peace. His first meal here was nearly interrupted as one of the cleaning crew had heard his meals screams. Luckily it would seem that humans still never look up when trying to find something.

He despised having to leave his favored hunting ground, but he knew, just knew, that those brats would be there when he woke from his sleep, and if he had remained, he would have starved. So, having to leave Derry was a long and arduous process for It. He traveled as far as he could through the sewers, until finally he had to emerge out into the open air and sunlight, either remaining invisible or taking on the guise of a lost traveler or animal in hopes of some good hearted fool would pick him up. And they did. They always did. Either out of pity, or attraction for a cute guise. He was certain that he had feasted on at least three different "Serial Killers" on his journey to find a new dwelling.

Eventually he made his way to Arizona. The heat, at first, was torturous. The large cities in the hottest part of the state made him want to vomit, the stink and heat of human waste was nearly unbearable, but luckily he managed to find his way up into the mountains of northern Arizona, to the little college town of Flagstaff, where the population was young and stupid. While he could not hunt his preferred prey as of right now, young children being far too closely watched over, he found new fun in preying on teenagers and young adults, those who were far too headstrong and confident in themselves. The ones who delighted in disobeying their parents and authority figures, made the easiest prey. Scaring them, however, was a bit more of a challenge. He had to observe longer, get closer, read

them.

Back in 1989, when he had first arrived, he didn't have time to feast on flesh and fear before going into his hibernation. He was far too tired to hunt at that point. He knew that when he awoke he would be hungrier than he had ever been in his long, long existence. So, he was careful with finding his new home. While the sewers were still his best bet for quiet and seclusion, the problem still remained that he was unfamiliar with this terrain, and he had no guarantee for if he would be left alone, unable to influence these humans as he had those in Maine. So, he was careful and quiet, scouting out the dark tunnels methodically until he was able to find the lower levels, the old tunnels that had been long since abandoned. Most of the entrances to those tunnels had been cemented over, but he was able to find one, one very close to a high school, that should allow him to have fairly easy pickings of the teenagers. And so he built up his little home in one of the lowest chambers, taking small items he was able to find on the service to build his lair, barely more than a cave with some semblance of a bed, or nest. And then he lay down to sleep.

Twenty Seven years later he did, indeed, awake with a fierce hunger. So intense his first reaction on waking was a deep growl of hatred towards his escaped prey. After a fit of rage, he slowly, carefully made his way up to the water drains along the roads to look at the changed city. Amazing, really, how much things change in twenty seven years. The streets looked freshly paved, new flashing lights for signs in front of a school, instead of the old letter boards. Bicycles that made buzzing noises and ran off of motors, like a child's motorcycle. Small, thin contraptions humans were using to communicate with each other. He had to admit one thing, humans were very quick to advance. But that also made them cocky and stupid, much more susceptible to their fears, after all...they create such grand things, how could there possibly be anything they don't understand?

Less than a day after waking, Pennywise took his first meal of the year, a homeless woman who had been sleeping in an alleyway. Still unsure of his new surroundings, he figured it would be safest to take someone that no one would miss. It was not hard to frighten the older woman, simply take on the form of the man who had broken

her spirit. It wasn't the best of meals, but in that moment he hadn't cared, he was starving, and in need of food. And so she was the first in Flagstaff to float.

It had been a few months since that woman, and Pennywise had been quick to learn the best times, places, and what prey to go for. His presence had certainly been noticed, what with a curfew being placed, and armed patrols making their way around neighborhoods, but those he could deal with on his own. Hell, most of the time the food took care of it for him. Teenagers sneaking out in the middle of the night for a lovers tryst, drunkards passing out in the street, and the occasional child whose parents simply didn't seem to care. So far he was feeding well, much better than he had back in Derry, but he was aware that he needed to be cautious. If he happened to come upon another group like he had before, he would be run off again, and he did not want that. Now that he could slow down a bit, he took more time to study his prey before appearing to them, sometimes opting for a different meal. And now that school was out, he would have even more time to flavor the meat, as kids would not be trapped in their little prisons with adults for at least a few months. They would be outside, walking around, being even more stupid than they already were, drunk off of summer heat. That was one of the reasons why he had attended the graduation, to start scouting his prey early, so he knew who to focus on.

But that one girl had thrown a wrench into his plans, slightly. He wasn't even sure as to why he had let her see him when he did, he was supposed to just be window shopping, but no. He showed himself to her and she saw, she definitely saw. The thing that got to him the most was the way she smelled when she saw him. No fear, none, just confusion and...a strange curiosity about her. Something was off about that girl, but he just couldn't place it. Perhaps she simply was one of the rare few who were no longer afraid of clowns? Or maybe she was simply used to experiencing weird things, being a new age with new technology and horror movies and television.

However the curiosity about her had distracted him from his original plan. He wanted to learn more, to see what she does fear, and feast on it. And so he followed her. She got into a car with the red-haired boy and he took her to an apartment building not too far from where

he had taken the snake girl. When she got out of the car and said good night to the young man she stood outside the door for a short while, taking off her cap and robe. He watched her as she did so. She looked older than the other kids at the graduation, especially her eyes, seemed to have a deep wisdom to them. He had heard other humans mention people with "Old Souls", perhaps this is what they had meant.

Pennywise let his yellow eyes crest over her figure for a moment, and could feel saliva starting to build under his tongue. Children were tasty because of how easy they were to scare, but this woman looked like she would be a great meal. She wasn't skinny or bony, her body had those natural curves of a real woman, her legs looked firm and muscled under her jeans, she was certainly athletic looking. Pennywise would almost have called her attractive, but his thoughts, at that moment, was that he wanted to completely devour her.

He was about to, as well. He was all ready to make himself appear in front of her again when she turned and made her way into the building. Even from his distance he was able to hear the door lock behind her, and hear the voice inside.

"Where have you been, coming home so late?" It was the voice of a man. Pennywise frowned at the voice, he didn't like it. It seemed like a human who didn't even want to put effort into speaking.

"It was Graduation today, Dad."

Her voice. He had heard it before when she tried to tell her friend about seeing Pennywise. A voice that was surprisingly deep for a young woman, but still plenty feminine. He had a strength to it what made a shiver go up his spine. *She will be a hard one to frighten.* He knew that. He could tell just from that voice. He listened in on the rest of their conversation before the growling in his stomach caused him to turn away. Tonight was not the right night to take her, he would need to plan more before then. For now, he needed a far easier prey and so he quickly made his way to where all those kids were gathering for their party.

It was practically like an all you can eat buffet for Pennywise. All of those young, stupid teenagers all gathered in one place, being loud

and rowdy, getting drunk off of the atmosphere and the snuck in booze. In the first two hours alone he had the perfect opportunity to pick off at least a dozen of them who had snuck out to the back of the restaurant to either vomit, smoke, or fuck. But he waited. He felt almost depressed. After seeing his perfect meal in front of him, none of these scrawny, giggly KIDS held any interest in him. He simply sat there, taking the form of a small, grey cat, watching as one by one his prey returned to the safety of their hurd. It was nearly four, long tedious, hours later when, Finally, one of the more tasty kids came out back to light up a cigarette.

It was a young man, maybe about five foot ten, with bleached blonde hair cut short on the sides. He still wasn't anywhere near as appetizing as the girl with old soul, but he had meat on him, and was very, very easy to read.

Patrick, was his name. Pennywise didn't even have to read him to figure that out, one of his friends had called him before. And his fear...his fear was an old one, old and classic, nothing that would give Pennywise trouble in creating. Using the stealth of the cat he was currently pretending to be, he slinked back into the darkest shadows and took on its shape.

Patrick was looking at something on his phone when the wind around him started to pick up, causing leaves and debris to swirl around him, as if a helicopter was getting ready to take off right above him, Pennywise was actually able to see the goosebumps rise on the boys flesh. Blue eyes darted around the alleyway as lights flickered madly and a dull humming noise filled his was right beside him, if he wanted to he could grab him right then and there. But he didn't the sheer terror he was slowly building hadn't reached it's climax yet. Patrick turned to go back inside, snuffing out the butt of his cigarette as he did so. Pennywise locked the door with an invisible hand.

"What the fuck? Hey guys, open the door!" Patrick's voice was already shaking. He knew what all the signs pointed to. Despite being told it was stupid so many times, he knew they were real, he knew it! Pennywise smiled at the voice, the fear and made himself visible behind the boy, letting out a very audible, very hungry growl as he did so. Patrick froze where he stood and turned slowly to look behind

him. He had to crane his head upwards as he saw the tall, green creature, large black eyes reflecting the frightened image of his own face. Three long fingers reached out and covered his mouth before he had the chance to scream, as the thin line that was a mouth opened into rows and rows of sharp, glistening teeth.

Just as the final realisation hit Patrick, the fear had peaked in his heart, Pennywise felt the vomit come up against his hand, the boy was no longer able to contain it. He smiled and lunged forward, sinking his hundreds of teeth into the boy's shoulder and tore away, taking with him at least two pounds of flesh. The boy screamed against his hand, tears instantly coming into the wide, dilated eyes.

Swallowing the raw meat in one gulp, Pennywise dragged the bleeding boy away from the door and down into the nearby sewer drain, leaving only a trail of blood that was quickly washed away by the rain.

Once in the quiet safety of the tunnels, Pennywise dragged his latest snack back down the pipes, tearing off new chunks of flesh along the way, all the while hearing the terrified, painful moans of a boy who was bleeding to death. For a second he forgot about Maria, and simply enjoyed his meal, well flavored with fear and despair, filling his grumbling stomach. He had almost completely devoured his prey by the time he got back to his home. He dropped the boy on the ground and looked him, not having returned to his preferred form of the silver clown. Patrick was still alive, barely, and staring up at that white face, unable to speak or move due to the loss of blood and the shock. Pennywise knelt down next to him, a fun, child-like smile on his round face.

"It's alright Patrick." He said with his friendly voice, before looking above him. Just past the clowns bright red hair, Patrick was able to see the dozens of bodies floating in the tall tunnel, simply swirling around a small pile of belonging that Pennywise had started to collect, as he does. The clown looked back down at the boy, eyes bright shining gold. "Don't you worry. You'll float down here too."

And, as he does, he pulled back his lips, letting his real maw emerge from under the skin of his current form. Patrick had a vague vision of lights before the eternal darkness consumed his entire being.

Pennywise watched at Patrick floated up to join the others. Feeling well fed and in a good mood, he decided to go and scout out his prey again. He remembered exactly where that apartment was, and he knew just the pipes to take to get their quickly.

The journey was much faster under ground, and he emerged through a small drain on the floor of the walk-in shower. Invisible to the human eye, he walked out of the bathroom and looked around the small apartment for a moment, out of curiosity of her living space. The living room was small, and only had one chair in it, set in front of an old television. There were beer cans strewn about the place, along with several wrappers, bags, and leftover TV-Dinner trays. For a moment Pennywise thought he may have actually gone back in time, everything seemed so old and dull in comparison to the new age outside these walls.

He went through the kitchen, looking in the fridge and cabinets, they were all nearly empty, he didn't understand. Were they poor? Or did they just not care? Shaking his head he made his way back down the hallway and into one of the bedrooms. Inside was a kingsized bed that was old and smelled like piss and booze, laying on top of it was an older man, maybe in his late forties to early fifties. He had the same dusty hair as the girl, and he had to guess that this was the father who had forgotten about his daughter's graduation.

The man's snoring was loud and aggravating, causing Pennywise to growl slightly in disgust for this creature. Even if he had never thought much of humans to begin with, he had still thought most better than this waste of space. For a moment he thought about how a man like this would make very very easy prey, but then realised it would probably leave a bad aftertaste in his mouth. Pennywise shut the door again and then went into the next room over. It was her bedroom.

For the first time since arriving he found a clean place in the house. Her room was small and simple, she had very few belongings. In one corner was a fucking tackle and a small case that he assumed must hold hooks and bait. The closet was slightly ajar, and he could see inside was mostly denim and t-shirts. A few sweaters, and tank-tops dotted amongst them, along with one dress that still had a tag on it.

Turning back towards the small, twin bed, which on closer inspection was nothing more than a camping cot, he saw her. She was curled up on her side, wearing a pair of boxer shorts and a tank-top to sleep. She had kicked her blankets off the foot of the cot, her single pillow laid neatly under her head, brown hair still braided. Pennywise tilted his head as he tried to read her dreams. It seemed incoherent, one of those nonsense creations of the human mind. She took a few steps away from her, leaning against the corner of the wall that connected her door to her closet, and simply stood there, watching her sleep and breathe, bathing in the scent that was of soap and coconut.

What is this woman?

5. Chapter 5

Authors Note: I just wanted to give a big thank you to those of you who have Favorited and followed my story, along with those who have left reviews! I hope to see more coming in! :D

Encounter; Patricia Harris

Patricia had been crushed when she had heard about Patrick's disappearance. She and Patrick had been close friends ever since they were in diapers, he always following her around like a little lost puppy, and her always scaring, or in the later years sassing, away anyone who would try to hurt or bully him. Despite her reputation, when she did find a good friend, she took care of them. But she hadn't been able to take care of Patrick the night of the graduation party.

She had been having so much fun, dancing and chatting with all of her friends, enjoying the good food, she hadn't even noticed when Patrick had stepped outside. His smoking had always bothered her, but at the same time she never thought she had the right to tell him what to do and not to do with his body. Still, if she had noticed she would have gone with him, maybe that would have saved him.

And maybe I would have disappeared too... That one dark, guilty thought always continued to crawl into the back of her mind, like some distant voice trying to justify her carelessness. *I didn't want Patrick to get taken, but...I don't want to die either, and he wouldn't have wanted me to....right?*

It had been a week since Patrick had been taken, and still there had been no sign. Patricia had started watching the news and reading the paper far more regularly, in hopes of finding anything, even looking for things the cops and FBI might have missed. But the only change in the paper was that a new name had been added to the list of missing peoples. Robert Fitzer. That made fourteen people missing in the last two months.

Shaking her head Patricia sat the paper down on the table, looking at the breakfast her mother had made. She wasn't very hungry, but she

forced herself to eat, one of the benefits of cheerleading was learning how to be healthy, you needed to be to do those stunts. But high kicks and pyramids seemed so unimportant now. There was no cheerleading scholarship for her, she had no interest in it after high school. Her Father was going to pay her way through school, get her a degree in art. But right now any inspiration for painting or sketching was out the window. All of her works came out looking dark and red, reflections of her own inner turmoil.

After she finished eating her breakfast, Patricia pulled out her phone, where she had heard a familiar jingle arise from. It was from Brittany.

"Maria and I are gonna be heading to the mall later, you in?"

Patricia couldn't help but give a small smile. Despite all the trouble she gave them, they were still willing to hang and make her feel better. Well, at least Brit was. Maria never seemed to care much at all about such things. Thinking back on it, Maria never really showed much emotion at school, she never cried or got angry at harsh words or even physical bullying. The only times Patricia had ever been able to actually pinpoint an actual emotion in her it had always been either happiness or annoyance.

But Patricia could worry about Weird, mismatched eyed, Maria later. She quickly sent her affirmative response to Brit before telling her mom and dad where she would be going, and then running up stairs to put some clothes on.

Patricia quickly put on her favorite lilac skirt with white blouse, wearing a cute pair of sandals with it, the perfect summer outfit. She did her makeup quickly before grabbing her bag and keys and making her way out to the garage.

In her haste to get going to the mall, in hopes of having allot of fun and forgetting about her Patrick for a short while, she stumbled on the stone stairs into the garage, casing her to grab the handrail and drop her keys over the side.

"Shit." She mumbled under her breath before turning and closing the door behind her and, more carefully, made her way down the last two steps and turned to grab her fuzzy keychain.

Only it wasn't there. She frowned and looked under the stairs to the little storage spot incase they slid, but there was no sign of that bright pink pom pom. Getting on her knees she started looking around the area more, moving cans of paint and WD-40, avoiding any cobwebs she happened to come across. After roughly five minutes of searching she was feeling both frustrated and very confused. They couldn't have gone far, it's not like they had little legs and ran away. Where the heck were her keys?

A slight jingling sound behind her caught her attention and looked around towards her feet, thinking she may have just kicked them. Instead of seeing the keys near her feet though, there were shoes. Black Converse standing in a puddle of water. Patricia followed the Converse up and saw they were attached to a pair of legs in men's skinny jeans, once blue but with a dark stain going down one leg. Above the legs were a torso, wearing a blue button up, and above that an all too familiar face. Fogged over blue eyes and bleached blonde hair, Patrick was standing there, her keys in his hand.

"P...Puh...Patrick?" SHe mumbled, shock and horror on her pale face. She could see were that dark stain had originated from, a massive chunk of his shoulder and neck had been ripped away, as if an animal had bitten down their. Blood had stained his Graduation outfit all the way down to his shoes.

"You...left me." Patrick's voice was deep and gravely, as if his throat was full of water. "You were supposed to protect me and you left me..."

"No!" Patricia tried to use her normal firm voice, only to have it crack under the strain. "No...I...I didn't, I didn't know..."

"It should have been you...you should have been the one...." Patrick took a step forward, and Patricia quickly started to scoot away, pushing with her heels against the pavement, until her back hit the shelf that held the car-cleaning supplies. She was trembling, unable to move as Patrick came closer and closer before kneeling down infront of her, his once blue eyes now shining gold.

"But no worries...you'll float with me soon enough." He smiled, showing long, fang-like teeth that were definitely not his own. One

cold, wet, dead hand reached out and grabbed her throat, and as that familiar face started to pull forward, opening his mouth wider and wider, in ways no human jaw should allow, Patricia was finally able to gather the strength to let out a loud, shrill, scream.

She brought her hands up to push the thing away from herself, continuing to let out scream after scream, hoping, praying, that her father would hear her and come to her rescue. She heard a deep growl in front of her, having closed her eyes she could not see the face that made the noise. Whatever it was, was strong, it was able to push against her hands with seemingly no effort, she could feel it get right up to her face, could smell the damp, rotting smell, like that of a basement coming off of it. This was NOT Patrick, she knew it wasn't, but still the only thought coming to her mind in that moment was, *I'm sorry, I'm sorry Patrick please...I'm sorry!*

In reality it took less than forty-five seconds for her father to react to her screams, but to Patricia it had felt like a lifetime. When the lights to the garage finally flicked on and Patricia opened her eyes, the image of Patrick was gone and her keys were sitting on the floor right in front of her shoe.

"Pats? Patricia honey, what happened?" Her father. She looked up at the tall, dark haired man practically lept off the small staircase and knelt in front of her, panic deep in his own eyes. She was trembling, a cold sweat running down her back. She was safe, at least for now. She looked around the garage, there was no sign of what had happened, no water on the floor, or footprints in the dust, just her.

"I...I saw.....I saw...." She mumbled, unable to look at her father as she examined the room. It could not have just been a hallucination. It was so real...there had to be proof here somewhere....

"Saw what, honey?" She looked back up into her father's concerned eyes. What could she say? That she saw a dead Patrick try to eat her? No....she was already questioning her own mental state, if her father thought the same.....

"A....a snake." She spluttered out. "A big brown snake, it came out from under the car...."

Her father turned and looked under the Lexis he had bought her for her sixteenth birthday. There was obviously no snake. He sighed and turned back to her, placing a warm hand on her cheek.

"You scared me, baby." He mumbled and kissed her head before standing up and reaching his hands down to her. She took his hands and stood up on wobbly knees. She gave him a tight hug and he patted her hair.

"It's all right. You go out with your friends and I'll get animal control in here to find it and take it somewhere more appropriate. It will all be taken care of by the time you get back. " He said, that big, soft smile on his face that always made her feel so safe. She nodded and gave him a kiss on the cheek before slipping into her car.

As she pulled out of the garage she could see her father already pulling out his phone. She knew they wouldn't find a snake, or if they did then that would be just another surprise she didn't need.

She was able to calm herself down on her drive to the mall, thinking back on what happened in a more logical mindset. It...seemed so incredibly real. The touch of that dead hand, the smell of it, there was no way it could have been a hallucination, unless....she really was going crazy. But she didn't think so. She had to shake it off right now though. She had to, otherwise she WOULD go crazy, just from thinking about it.

As she pulled up to Flagstaff mall she smiled as she saw the massive crowds of people all gathering in an area with rides. One of those summer fairs that came around every-year and always sat up by the mall. She never felt safe going on those rides, but the games had always been plenty fun. As she pulled into the parking lot she passed by a clown holding balloons. She frowned at it. Its pale, harlequin style suit in all silver did not match with the rest of the fair, he was too pale. Still he waved at her as she drove past, his buck-toothed smile seeming almost cruel as. As she passed by she swallowed and made her way to a parking spot closest to the entrance of the mall, and far away from the fair.

She hopped out of the car and immediately looked back towards the entrance to the lot. There was no clown in sight. She quickly scanned

the entire area around her, no silver suit or red balloons. There was, however, a Britney and a Maria standing near the entrance, Brit waving at her excitedly. Patricia smiled and started to make her way over to them, trying to shake the new fear out of her head.

That clown had yellow eyes.

6. Chapter 6

Encounter: Britney Asters

Flagstaff Mall was all abustle now that school was out. Teenagers and children all just wandering around, looking at the stores, getting their hair done, eating vending machine food, it was a true vision of summer. It had been a pain getting Maria to go with her and Patricia, but eventually she did give in to Brit's claims that "It'll help Patricia keep her mind off of Patrick." Despite her sometimes cold and indifferent demeanor, Maria did care about other people, Britney knew that, but MAN did it make her look like a heartless bitch from the outside.

In all honesty though, the real reason why Brit wanted Maria there was because she felt so much safer around her than she did with most of her other friends. Mateo was strong and all, but Maria had an air about her that made Brit feel like nothing bad could happen with her around. How Maria felt, Britney didn't know, really. Right now she was looking at the Pay Less window at a pair of boots, apparently her's were starting to wear in the sole.

"Why not get a pair of flats?" Patricia asked pointing at a pair of light blue, satin ballet flats. "They're great for summer, both casual and dressy! And no heels so you might still find a guy taller than you." Maria looked at the flats and shrugged, her pale shoulders looking broad in comparison to the two scrawny girls next to her.

"I'm not really interested in attracting guys." She said bluntly. "Besides those would be terrible for hiking or camping. Nah, I'll stick to my boots."

Patricia sighed and started to roll her eyes but Brit gave her a warning look. She had made her promise to at least TRY and be friendly with Maria, even if their personalities were on totally different spectrums.

"Well....is it so bad to be impractical on occasion?" Britney asked Maria, quite liking the shoes Patricia had pointed out. "I mean, keep your boots and stuff for when you're being all woodsy and stuff, but, I

mean, who knows? Maybe you'll get asked out on a date to someplace nice? Is it so bad to have a dressy backup? And the color would look great on you."

The moan that left Maria's throat was almost enough to make both girls giggle. Britney felt a little bad, but she so rarely got to see Maria express discomfort in general, the fact that FASHION and cute things were what could get her to react made it feel less horrible, especially since she wasn't doing it TO be mean, just to help.

At that moment Patricia gasped, causing both of the other girls to turn to her. With hands folded over her mouth and a sparkle in her eye, it was clear that she had just gotten an idea, that kind that Britney would probably find amusing, and Maria would probably find very irritating. Slowly she pulled her hands away from her gasping mouth and smiled, looking at Maria.

"Let's get you a total makeover." She said quietly. Brittany was practically bouncing at the thought of it. Talk about old memories right there, makeover! It was such a childish thing, but hey, they were only eighteen! TEEN! That means they can still be a little silly and childish right? THEY didn't have to fall into full adulthood until Twenty!

Maria, on the other hand, had gone completely blank in the face, her eyes, both a matching brown due to her contact lenses, were staring at them both as if they were a couple of door to door salesmen.

"You come anywhere near me with makeup and I will flush all your brushes down the sewer." She said, folding her arms. Britney laughed but Patricia pouted. Maria rolled her eyes and sighed. "I'm fine with the way I am. I got no interest in dating or looking cute. Right now, I want to enjoy the Summer and get ready for College. So, rather than worrying about me, why don't you go get some new shoes? Didn't you say you wanted a pair of professional heels for work interviews?"

And so the group of three all made their way into the not-too-expensive shoe store and started browsing. Patricia, being who she was, ended up buying three new pairs of shoes, all either heels or flats. Maria ended rejoining them after going and purchasing a new pair of hiking boots. While as Britney went ahead and purchased

those blue flats from the window. Patty did have really good taste in clothing.

The day at the mall ended up being allot of fun for Britney, and it seemed like for Patricia too! Maria seemed to just be there. She would buy the occasional thing, and offer her opinion on a skirt when asked, though e\her replies usually hemmed around it being impractical. As the three of them slipped into the Denny's that was located near the rest of the food court, Britney turned to the tall girl as Patricia talked to the hostess about getting a table for three.

"Hey Maria? Thanks for coming but....if you're really not enjoying yourself then I wouldn't mind if you chose to go home...." Maria's reply was a small half-smile and a shake of the head, a few strands of hair falling out her ponytail.

"It's all good, Brit. The mall's not really my thing but I don't mind it too much. Besides...." She looked over at Patricia who was chatting to a few girls from their school. "Did you see her when she first pulled up? She looked pale as a ghost. Something happened and...I didn't feel right leaving just the two of you alone."

Britney frowned slightly before looking at Patricia herself and nodding. She had noticed, but had brushed it off as her just being upset about Patrick's disappearance. But looking back it had to have been more than that. Comparing her face then to the way it was now, she had been damn near translucent pale.

Eventually Patricia returned to the group and the three of them were taken to a booth at the far end of the restaurant. Taking a seat they all ordered their drinks, Diet Coaks for Patricia and Britney, and a black coffee for Maria. As the three sat and looked over the menus, Brit took a look around the room. It was pretty full, allot of families. There were kids everywhere with face paint and balloons, probably from the fair. That actually gave Brit an idea.

"Hey you two, how about after lunch we go the fair? Play some games?" She asked. A choking noise next to her caught her attention and she turned to see Patricia choking on her water. "You okay?"

"Yea...yeah I'm fine..." She replied through her coughs. "But no

fair...please. I saw the creepiest looking clown when I first drove in here, do NOT want to go near him."

"A clown?" Britney frowned slightly. "I didn't see a clown, and these fairs don't usually have em, they're too cheap for that kind of labor... are you sure you weren't imagining it, or was it on a poster or something?"

"No, it was there." Patricia said, looking slightly offended at Britney before turning and bowing her head slightly. "At least...I'm pretty sure. He looked real. He had all these red balloons and smiled at me.... But when I got out of my car and looked back to where I saw him, I didn't see him there, or his balloons..."

Brit frowned and shook her head, that kinda sounds like a daydream. I mean.....she supposed there could have been a clown there but, you don't see them that often nowadays. Especially not at one of those cheap, set-up-and-go fairs that passed through.

"Was it wearing a silver Harlequin style suit? With markings like this?" Maria asked, getting both of their attention. She passed her fingers up from the corners of her mouth in a slight squiggle up and over her eyes, like reverse tears.

"Yeah....yeah he did..." Patricia said, pure recognition in her eyes.

"Wait you saw it to? How did I miss it, I was the one driving us?" Brit asked, slightly baffled, but Maria shook her head, setting her coffee on the table.

"Not here. It's the same clown I saw at Graduation. Charlie made fun of me for it but.....looking back again something was off about it." She looked at the girls and folded her hands, probably the first time Brit had ever seen Maria look down right uncomfortable. "It almost seemed like....it could just teleport. At one moment it was on the far field and the next....I saw it RIGHT behind the camera man.....I thought I was going crazy since no one else seemed to notice it..."

Brit just stared at Maria, Patricia now looking severely shaken. *What the ACTUAL Heck? A Teleporting Clown? Sounds like something out of some Cheap Horror movie.* As Britney was trying to put the pieces

together in her own mind a hand reached out from behind her and touched her shoulder, causing her to jump and whip around to see who it was.

Bright red hair and over six feet tall, Charlie was one heck of an image to turn face to face to. Bright sighed at the big grin on his face.

"Hia Girls! " Charlie said, sitting on his knees over the back of his booth. "Didn't know you were here! Hey Mat! Your girlfriend's here!"

At hearing the name Britney peeked up over the back of the booth and saw, sitting on the other side of their own table, was Mateo, smiling at her. She smiled back and looked around at the group of boys. Charlie, Mateo, and David were all there, looking like they had just come FROM the fair. Charlie, who had been babbling on about something, nudged Brit in the side to get her attention.

"Come on and join us!" Charlie said, scootching in the booth to as close to the window as he could. "We're all here, let's sit together, you know, like friends!"

Britney and Patricia were both already starting to move when Maria laughed at Charlie, shaking her head.

"Kinda hard to fit six people into a booth spot, Charlie. Let's get a table." Maria, always the voice of Pragmatism. She got up and went up to the hostess, asking if it was okay. After some fumbling and arranging, the group managed to get set at one of the larger tables, sitting in a stagger of boy-girl-boy, for some reason. Honestly though, Britney didn't mind, seeing as she was able to sit next to Mateo.

"You two kinda make me wanna vomit." Charlie the charmer, for sure. The rest of the table laughed at the, sadly true, comment before settling into the previous conversation.

"Couldn't help but hear you, Mar. So you're seeing your phantom clowns again?" Charlie asked, drinking his. "Honestly, you all sounded out right terrified. What did some clown traumatise you as a little kid?"

"Never actually saw one in person before Graduation." Maria said,

leaning her elbows on the table. "But now that I know I'm not the only person to have seen it, it makes it even creepier."

"Look Mar...anyone could have missed a clown while driving, especially into that craze of people at the fair. But you are saying that there was a clown, that only you could see, AT Graduation, RIGHT in front of us, aaaaaand....we didn't see it. I believe Patricia, but your story is still a bit of a stretch..."

"I believe her." David spoke up for the first time, dark eyes looking out from under his black hair. "I mean, she was able to describe Patricia's clown right? SO it had to have been the same one." Charlie scoffed but the others all looked very concerned. Patricia shrugged, trying to be nonchalant about it as she caught Maria's eye.

"Maybe we're both going nuts? Summer boiling our brains and all?" She asked, her voice shaking slightly through the forced lightness of her tone.

Maria gave a very half-hearted laugh before taking a drink of her coffee. Brit followed suit, the conversation going from creepy, to slightly depressing, to even more creepy. No matter what was going on, Brit HATED clowns, with a passion. She wasn't even sure where it came from, if there was a clown when she was really really little or something, but she could not stand them. She remembered being offered a balloon by one when she was ten and being so scared she had punched the big red nose right off his face.

Shaking her head, Brit put down her glass and stood up, Mateo looking up at her as she did so.

"I'll be right back." She said and started to make her way to the restrooms. There was a little bit of a wait, but eventually one of the stalls opened up. As she got inside she sat down and opened up her bag, pulling out her compact to check on her makeup.

The whole conversation had been disturbing to her. She had no idea if it was real, matching hallucinations, or one of those cases of people sharing dreams? Whatever it was, she was not interested in continuing the conversation at all. She sighed again and put the small mirror away.

After a few more minutes Brit stood up, cleaned, and flushed the toilet only to hear a deep, disgusting, gurgling sound. She turned to look, the toilet was clogged.

"Ugh!" She hated this. Now she would have to go and tell one of the people who worked at the restaurant so they could fix it, how embarrassing. As she turned to unhook the latch, there was another gurgle, louder. This time it nearly sounded....like a laugh...

Turning again, Brit stared at the toilet bowl, eyes slowly going wide. There was a hand reaching out of the bowl. A hand wearing a white glove, and was wearing silver frills around the wrist. Soon it was joined by another hand, which propped itself against the lip and started to push, red hair and yellow eyes in a white face started to rise. Brit's heart started to pound as she started to flail her hand out behind her, looking for the latch, unable to take her eyes off of what was slowly starting to emerge.

The face just as Maria had described, with the strange red markings, had fully emerged from the toilet, and silver legs were starting to step out onto the floor. The stall was much too small, and where the fuck was the latch?! The clown rose, standing in front of her like a tower. He shook his entire body, sending water and filth splattering onto Britney to the sound of little bells, before smiling at her with his yellow eyes.

"Time to float, Brit." He said, his voice shockingly light, despite the growl in the undertone. He smiled, and she screamed.

Already in her face due to the small confines of the stall, the force with which he pushed her back caused the door to come completely off its hinges with a loud crash, causing Brit to fall onto her back, clown on top of her, his hand clasping her chin.

"N...n...NO!" She cried. She could feel tears streaming down her face as she pushed and kicked at the clown, who simply smiled at her before turning his face into a mockery of her fear, an exaggerated frown and a squeaky whine of a voice coming out.

"Oh no no no..." The crying always fading back into a giggling laughter, causing drool to fall from his mouth onto her face as the

hand holding her tightened. Nails, or was it claws, digging into her cheeks. Still she cried, and screamed, punching, clawing, even trying to bite it as it continued to mock her.

Brit had to keep her eyes open, if she looked away, it would kill her. She didn't want to die, she wanted to be able to fight, but the more her hammering had no effect, the weaker her arms became. Her kicking ceased into trembling shakes, her hands clasped onto the arms of the clown, desperately trying to push him away as he smiled, showing the hungry maw that was going to sink into her flesh. Britney's eyes grew wider and wider as the mouth opened more and more, each inch his lips pulled back revealing more and more teeth, the skin on his face pulling away from it like some form of mask. As he...no....it drew closer and closer, the maw filled Brit's entire vision, slowly seeing just how far back those razors went, the stench of it's breath filled her lungs as she became aware of the lights dancing at the back of it's throat. She wanted to look away, wanted to turn and close her eyes, but the lights wanted her to move forward, to lean in to the fear that was consuming her, and she was about to when...

"Brit!"

The familiar voice drew her back and she turned to see the group standing in the door to the restroom, Maria standing ahead of all of them.

"What the holy fuck is that!?" Charlie's exclamation confirmed it. This was all real.

7. Chapter 7

Authors note: Warning, this chapter is where some adult content has officially begun. You have been warned. And thank you so much for your reviews, messages, Likes and Follows! I hope to see more, it really encourages me to keep writing!

Maria

David could feel his blood freeze as he looked at the vision in front of them. This...clown was over Britney, an elongated maw of teeth was poking out from between it's red lips, like a push-pop of horror. The thing, whatever it was, turned toward the group, letting out a deep growling hiss as it started to back away, into the stall with a broken down door. David took a step backwards, his heart ringing in his ears just at the sight of it. Maria took several steps forward, towards Britney, then turning to look into the stall.

For a moment, it looked as if Maria was planning on trying to catch it, run it down, but she stopped right at the door-posts, looking into it with a pale, but steady expression. After a few seconds she turned to Britney and started to look her over.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt?" Maria asked, her voice as calm and cool as ever. *What the fuck? How can she be so damn calm?!* David asked in his own mind, he himself still unable to move. Mateo, however, was able to push past him, running over to his girlfriend and hugging her tightly, but carefully, looking her over to see if she was hurt.

It was only a few more minutes before an even bigger crowd started to gather at the restroom entrance, a couple of security guards pushing through the lot of them. David stared at them for a moment, still mute.

"What's going on, what happened?" One of them asked, immediately going to where Britney was still shivering on the floor, staring blankly up at Maria. *Is she even gonna be able to answer them? She looks like she's in shock...*

"She was attacked." Maria answered calmly. "By a man, we came in just in time. He climbed up through that hole and started to crawl away." Maria pointed up to the ceiling, where one of the maintenance panels was missing.

"Did you get a good look at the man?" He asked Maria, who shook her head.

"He was wearing one of those ski mask things." She explained. David looked to Charlie who shrugged. *Why was she lying?*

The officer turned to David, Charlie, and Patricia.

"Is that what happened?" He asked and, for some reason, all three of them nodded.

The security guards got onto their radios, immediately contacting the police, medics, and the Mall owners. The restroom was cleared out, and Britney was sat down on a chair as the police took her statement and the medics began to look her over. It was a very long process, taking nearly three hours in total to get their statements taken down, and to answer questions. The entire group, Britney included, followed along with Maria's story. Some guy in a ski mask and black clothes dropped down on Brit from the open tile in the ceiling and started to attack her, but ran away once her friends got there.

Luckily Brit seemed to only have suffered from a few cuts in her cheeks and one hell of a fright. The doctors wanted to check for a concussion, fearing the trauma caused when she was pushed through the stall door, but she refused to go the Hospital, opting instead to go home with her friends.

Once they were all free to go home, with a notice that they might be called on for questions in the future, they all instantly made their way out of the mall and towards their cars. The first one they got to was Brit's, but since she was in no shape to drive Mateo said he would drive her and Maria back, since he had pooled with Charlie anyway to get there. As he was getting ready to help Brit into her seat, David spoke up to Maria.

"Why did you make up that story?" He asked, and the others all

looked at him like he was nuts. Maria stuffed her hands in her pockets and leaned against the car, as if he had just asked her how her day was.

"You think we should have told the cops that our friend was attacked by a vampire clown?" She asked dryly. "I think it's pretty obvious that not everyone can see this thing. The last thing we need right now is for us all to be taken to the loonybin and given shock therapy." David just gaped at her. That...was a very good, if morbid, point. He was about to open his mouth again, but Britney spoke up first.

"What was that thing?" She asked, looking at the group. "I mean...it wasn't human, was it?"

"No...not human." Maria said, folding her arms. "I want to find out too, but not here. We need to be somewhere safer to talk about this. Somewhere private, maybe with, like, a map of the town or something."

"You can use my garage." David spoke up. "My dad's a history nerd, and he loves collecting maps and stuff. Also, the folks are out of town on a third honeymoon, so we'll be alone."

Maria and the others all agreed to meet up at David's house tomorrow morning. Mateo and Maria took Britney home, Maria opting to stay the night with her to make sure she was okay, while David, Charlie, and Patricia all went home in their own cars.

After arriving at his own home, David pulled out his phone and sent texts to the other five saying he had arrived safely, as they had all promised to do. Shortly after sending his, all of the others started to send theirs. Once the last message was received David let out a heavy sigh, flopping down on his bed. The house was so quiet when he was alone, and he didn't really like it. He was half expecting to hear that growling hiss again, or see those yellow eyes.

Swallowing, David sat up and looked towards the computer on his desk, what had the dancing lights screensaver on it. He watched the colorful stripes dance on the screen for a moment before standing and moving to the chair, touching the mouse to bring up the desktop photo, Maria.

It was from last years yearbook. He had a smile on her face, like all the other kids, but hers was...beautiful. She had her contact in, as usual, a fact that still made David feel slightly upset. He had only seen her mismatched eyes once in the past, and he had thought the green of her left eye was way more beautiful than the dull brown the contact lense created. The fact that she felt the need to hide it, made him sad.

He looked over at the face on the screen, the forced yet beautiful smile, her square jaw contrasting with more delicate features. Her hair was shorter then, tied off to the side so that it fell over one shoulder. She wasn't wearing any makeup, she didn't need to. Her skin was clear and smooth, like porcelain or ivory.

For four years he had wanted to reach out and touch that face, but he never did. Maria always seemed to closed off and distant to people, especially men. He had remembered how his heart ached when the rumors about her being a lesbian had started to circulate throughout the school. Apparently she had gone out on a date with some guy, David didn't remember his name, and they had gone to some horror movie. According to the guy she never flinched, as a matter of fact he had felt to embarrassed that he had been more scared than she was. After that she did not agree to anymore dates, not from him or any other guy in school. Thus, the rumors started.

David had always taken it to just mean she wasn't the typical highschool girl, she was tough, brave, but that didn't make her a lesbian. Still...the fact that she never had another boyfriend did make the rumors worse. To be fair, she never had a girlfriend so far as he knew either.

Today he had seen that fearlessness firsthand. While everyone else was petrified, only able to shake with fear at that clown, Maria had moved towards it. It had been....terrifying and amazing. The determination on her face had been...beautiful, the way she moved, how her hands clenched, all of it had made him want to do nothing but hold her. To feel that power with all of himself.

Through thinking of that moment, and looking at her face in the photo, he started to feel the tightness of his jeans, a familiar side effect of seeing Maria. Licking his lips and making sure tissues were

close by, he unfastened his fly and started to stroke himself, looking into the eyes of the photo, he started to imagine what it would be like to have her. How firm her body would be, and how soft. What sort of sounds she would make as he took her over and over and over.

"Maria...Maria...." He leaned back, biting down on his lower lip as the pressure built more and more with each stroke, his mind forming an image of her sprawled out beneath him, hair strone about her head on a pillow, resembling a lion's mane, one brown eye and one green eye staring at him with a fierce determination, lips red and slightly parted, breathing heavy. She was the beast he was desperate to tame.

Several hours later, after satisfying his fantasies, David pulled up chrome and started to do some research. At first there was little to no success, though looking up "Monster Clown." Was probably a bad idea anyway, given today's media. It took him a while and several different searches before something very, VERY, interesting came up. He pulled up the articles he could find and started to print off sheet after sheet., downloading a few maps to his iphone. He wasn't positive, but...it seemed to fit what was happening in Flagstaff.

It wasn't until about ten that night that David was finally able to lay down in his bed and get some sleep. It had been a very, very long day. As he layed down he pulled out his phone again and sent messages to his friends, wanting to make sure they were all still okay before going off to sleep. Once the last message of confirmation beeped on his phone, it was from Maria, he plugged in the charging cable and turned off his lights, closing his eyes and falling into disturbing dreams.

He was in dark tunnels, wretched water up to his ankles as he sloshed down dark passageways. He was in the sewers. He was listening, just as much as he was looking, no flashlight to help him find his way. He could hear...something. A voice was coming from deeper inside the tunnel. He couldn't make it out, but it seemed familiar. He continued to make his way towards it.

He wasn't sure how long he was sloshing his way forward before the first face came into view. A face, floating in the grey water, with no

body attached. Blue eyes wide and staring, fogged over, blonde hair turned dark from the filth and wet. One word was seemingly carved into her forehead. "Liar." David swallowed as he stared at Patricia's head, slowly moving past it, trying not to disturb it. As he looked away from her, he saw another familiar face, with dark hair plastered to the dark skin, "Coward." was carved into Mateo's head.

Floating right along side Mateo, was Britney, just as he had last seen her, with cuts on her horrified face, only her eyes were now cloudy and grey. "Wanting."

David started moving faster, picking up his feet more in hopes of moving faster. He was practically running towards the distant voices now, leaving the dead, familiar faces behind him as he splashed and sprayed water up his own jeans and onto the walls. Every step forward revealed another face, another person he knew, each with some sin etched into their skulls.

In his desperate movements his foot missed a sudden drop in the floor under the water, and he was sent to his knees, water splashing up and covering him for a single moment. As he coughed and gagged at the smell, trying to wipe the shit out of his eyes, he saw that he was face to face with yet another, all too familiar image.

"Betrayal" Was still bleeding slightly, mixing in with the wet red hair of Charles, whose eyes were still filled with tears. David stood up, staring down at the freckled face, uncontrollable shivers having taken control of his body. He probably would have just stood there forever, looking at that face, had he not heard the sound of a deep moan coming from just a little further ahead. He looked up and saw an iron door, slightly ajar. The sounds of the voice were coming from in there. A deep feminine voice, letting out guttural moans and gasps, accompanied by deep, feral growls.

He swallowed again, taking a tentative step forward, more concerned with being silent, rather than being fast. Each step seemed to take an eternity, but eventually he was able to reach the door, shivering from fear and cold. He bit his lower lip before reaching out and pushing the door open all the way.

Craning his head upwards, David's eyes went wide at the mountain of

items that was in this dark cavern. He could pinpoint bikes, bags, skateboards, scooters, notepads, toys, clothing. All manner of things piled up around what looked like the side of an old circus wagon, with a clown painted on the side and the words "Presenting! Pennywise the Dancing Clown!" Written around the clown. And all around the mountain of possessions were bodies, dozens and dozens of bodies just floating in a circle, slowly going up and down. All of them missing their heads.

"Aah..ah...." The moans were so clear now. David's eyes trailed all the way down from the top of the mountain to the bottom, landing on a vision he had dreamed of so many times, only now it was twisted in a way that made him sick, and angry.

He could see her back, smooth and porcelain, bare. She was facing away from him, her long hair was parted in the middle and was currently flowing down the front of her body, leaving her back bare for him to see as she moved. Her hips were taught, legs wrapped around the figure in front of her as she moved in a fluid motion, riding. Two gloved hands slid up her back, holding her close to the figure. Those hands slid to her waist and held her hips still, and she started to lean back. Her hair falling down into the water behind her as she arched her back, her natural eyes looking directly at David as she bared her entire body to the creature that was taking her. David's eyes trailed over her exposed breasts and torso before meeting eyes with the figure from before. White faced with a red smile and yellow eyes, stared directly into David as it laid Maria back and started to take her in it's own way.

Her moans....were the moans he had imagined her making for HIM. The face that displays nothing but pleasure and ecstasy. Her long, toned arms and hands trailing up silver arms and shoulders to cling to that monster.

"You want her, David?" The voice of the clown, cold and mocking. "I know you do. So do I....but I will be the one to take her, while you float away into nothingness...like all the rest....."

And the clown started to laugh, starting out so high and light and becoming deep and menacing as he...it....thrust into Maria, HIS Maria, harder and deeper, causing her to arch and buck, clinging to

this thing with desperation and she started to laugh with it.

David watched in horror as this vision played out before him, unable to move, to do anything to put a stop to the sinful act before him. All he could do was watch and let out an angry, bellowing scream....of jealousy.

It was eight in the morning when David was finally released from his nightmare, waking to a cold sweat and a rage so deep in his gut he thought he was going to vomit. He quickly jumped out of bed and checked his phone, the group would be on their way there shortly. Shaking the images of last night out of his mind he grabbed a clean set of clothing and practically ran to the bathroom, where he instantly turned on the shower.

Ripping off his shirt, David looked at himself in the mirror. He was pale, and had dark shadows under his eyes, black hair plastered to his forehead with sweat. He looked over his body, he was in good shape. Probably the most athletic of the entire group, except for maybe Maria. But somehow it seemed.....lackluster. Like his abs and pecs were nothing, his face, which he had always thought as being at least reasonably handsome, seemed hideous to his mind. The image that came to him was that of the clown he had seen taking his Maria. Tall and slender, lean, like a swimmer's body. Silver clothing, shiny yet muted. Bright eyes and a smile that made everything feel like your nerves were on fire, like every caress would feel orgasmic, every cut of a blade like torture....

He swallowed and looked at his clothing, it was all too modern, too plain. Jeans and a silly T-shirt? She would be bored. It's no wonder that **THING** would attract her, it's interesting, it's new...an extraordinary woman would want something extraordinary....not some soccer jock, with a generic haircut, generic clothes and a generic body...

David took a step into the shower and started to clean the sweat off of himself, every inch he lathered with soap he criticised. He was too broad, he had too much of a tan, too much hair, not tall enough, not big enough. Every moment causing him to hate himself more and more.

As he dried off his hair and started putting on his not-good-enough clothing he decided that he would BECOME good enough. He would become something she would want. He refused to let that thing have her.

And so as he heard the beep on his phone, he read the message with a new determination. Maria and the others were all on their way to his hous. He would show them what he had found the other night, and show that he can be what she wants. He would be useful and impressive, no matter what.

8. Chapter 8

First Dance

Charles Tristerson had one hell of a time getting out of bed the next morning, his long, spider-like legs seemingly had forgotten how to work. Having barely slept at all, he was paler than usual, even his ginger hair seemed to lack color in his reflection. It was so bad that his mother had been mildly insistent that he stay home and take some medicine, but he refused, saying he had promised his friends. It took some time to convince her it was just a bad night's sleep and not a summer cold, but eventually he was in his car, pulling out of his driveway and making his way toward David's house.

When he was about halfway to the house his phone beeped next to him. He picked it up and took a quick glance at the message. Maria and Britney were on their way there too. Tossing his phone back down, not feeling up to even attempting his normal habit of texting and driving, he listened as two more beeps alerted him of Patricia and Mateo heading out from their homes.

"Send a mass text when you are leaving or arrive somewhere." Maria had said. "That way we can keep track of each other when we're not together."

Cool and calm, Maria had been like that since the age of seven. Charlie was able to remember, at least vaguely, the moment he realised she had changed. She had been hospitalised, sick with some genetic disorder. He never got much in terms of details, and he wasn't about to do a bunch of research just to figure it out, all he knew is that after she got out of the hospital, she wasn't afraid of anything.

Not when she got cornered by Gregory Hamil and his gang, or when reports of a murderer possibly passing through Flag made its rounds. Hell, not even when a couple of drunks attacked her on her way home from school. Always calm. He wasn't sure if it was trauma or what, but it was weird.

Weird, and right now, really fucking convenient. Charlie thought to himself as he pulled to a stop at a red light. *She can actually think and*

be reasonable, while the rest of us are pissing our pants. He sighed and thought back on the events from yesterday, that clown looming over Brit, those teeth and eyes seeming so alien, despite coming from a form that had seemed so human on the outside.

The dreams last night didn't help one bit, him sloshing alone in the sewers, finding all of his friends dead, one by one, except for Maria. She had been moving forward ahead, he had been trying to catch her. When they came to a massive chamber, with a mountain of human belongings, surrounded by floating corpses, they saw the clown.

"Fight it with me." Maria had said, looking calm and ready, but his own heart was ringing in his ears, his legs didn't want to work.

"I..I'm scared...." He had replied, not able to take his eyes off of the glowing eyes and sharp teeth that grinned at him.

"We can beat it if we fight together, Charlie. If you run...I'll die." She turned and looked at him, her mismatched eyes so calm and direct. She looked like a woman who could take on the world. But he wasn't like that, he was a normal man who just wanted to live his life. He shook his head and started to step away. One, two, three steps, as the Clown came up behind Maria, a gloved hand reaching around her to grasp at her throat.

Fear should have shown on her face, but there was none. Instead there was a growing realisation and anger. She looked at him with a coldness that was equally as terrifying as the clown. Charlie turned around, and ran away, hearing the insidious cackle behind him.

Just remembering that dream caused Charles to break into a cold sweat, slowly pushing on the gas pedal as the light turned green. He had to shake it off. It was just a dream, playing out something he was afraid of. He would never turn his back on Maria like that, God knows how many times she's saved his scrawny ass. But still...that clown...

It was about a half-hour drive to get to David's house, Charlie pulled up to the curb just as Maria and Brit were stepping out of their car. Charlie turned off his ignition and took a deep breath before stepping out and waving to the girls.

"Hello ladies!" He called, forcing his usual big grin as he approached them. He gave Maria a pat on the shoulder before turning to Britney. "You okay?"

Britney nodded, her blonde curls looking limp in the damp air. He pulled her into a tight hug, rubbing her shoulders slightly. She hugged him back before stepping away and looking off to the side. He followed her gaze to see David, Mateo, and Patricia all making their way towards them, looking very pale and tired. It looked like no one got a good night's sleep.

"Hey." David said giving everyone a smile, Charlie definitely noticing how that smile lingered a little extra moment on Maria. The guy was smitten, anyone with eyes could see it. Charlie was, however, pulled out of his side thoughts as Romeo continued talking. "I know I said the garage but we got the whole house to ourselves, and there's something I want you all to see."

Charlie frowned for a moment as David turned around and started to make his way into the house, the group all following him. David's house was small but comfortable, perfect for the three-person household that usually resided there. Today, though, it was very quiet, the only sound being the slight patter of rain that started to fall against the window. As the group kicked off their shoes at the door, David moved forward and started to pull up the living room computer, switching on the TV.

The group of five sat on the sofa and recliner, Maria taking a seat on the floor because of a lack of chairs, as the TV showed the computer screen. Yay smart TVs. David turned and looked at the TV as he started to pull up web page after web page, each with a headline like "Derry Ironworks Explodes, 88 dead!" Or "Bowers admits to kidnapping and Murder!"

Just as Charlie was about to ask what was going on, David pulled out a stack of papers and handed them to the group.

"I...er...Didn't get allot of sleep last night, so I figured I would do some research, and....I found a few things."

"A few?" Charlie asked, looking down at one of the papers. "You have

enough here for a thesis on disaster....what is all this crap?"

"It's...the clown, I think." David said, looking very unsteady as the group looked up at him.

"Explain." Patricia said, having gone pale looking at a particularly gruesome photo in her hand. There was a boy's head in a fucking tree!

"Well...I couldn't help but notice that this clown stuff hadn't started happening until the rash of disappearances. I think it's pretty safe to assume that the Clown's responsible for that shit. So, I looked back to see if there were any other instances of these kinds of mass kidnappings, or murders, and I found this." He pulled up a map of a town in Main, called Derry. "So this town has one fucked up history. Deaths and disappearances more than six times the national average. Not only that, but I noticed a pattern that happened there for a long time. The Derry Ironworks exploded in 1908, after that a massacre with the Bradley Gang in 1935, the Black Spot Club burned down in 1962, and then in 1989 a bunch of kids went missing and were never found. All of these events ended in the deaths of over a hundred people, and each happened damn-near exactly twenty-seven years apart, and now...."

"Exactly twenty-seven years after the disappearances, people are going missing again. Only, instead of being in Derry Maine, it's happening in Flagstaff Arizona..." Maria said, nodding as she seemed to skin over the article in her own hands.

"But...I mean, if It is behind all of these things, why leave Derry?" Patricia asked, putting the papers down on her lap. Charlie shrugged as David did the same. It was a good theory but there were holes in it.

"Maybe someone found out about it." Maria said, flipping to another page. "I mean....maybe something happened and it got found out and had to leave? Or maybe it over-hunted and needed a new place to get food?"

"F...food?" Britney swallowed, shaking again. Mateo reached over and put his arm around her gently. "Y...you mean it's eating people?"

"Does anything make sense?" Maria asked, looking up at Brit. "I mean the thing damn near bit down on you, at least it looked like something hungry."

"Yeah.....I think so too." Patricia said, taking a breath. "I.....before I saw the clown I saw....Patrick." The group turned and stared at her, eyes wide. "I...thought I was going crazy but....he....had those teeth and those eyes.....I know it's the same thing it just looked different..."

"Some sort of shapeshifter?" Mateo asked, swallowing. "I mean....I thought I saw yellow eyes in my car once but...that's all. I didn't see anything until yesterday."

"If it is a shapechanger then it could take on any form, maybe even one of us." Maria said, her face never changing. *Fuck that's creepy.* Charlie thought as he stared at her. "But I don't think it would. I think...it wants to scare us."

"But why?" Britney asked, shaking with a sort of panic as David flipped to a new picture on the TV, one of the Derry Iron Works. "I mean...why does it want to scare and eat us?! Why is it so evil!?"

"Whoever said it's evil?" Maria said, looking at Brit. Charlie gaped at her, along with the rest of the group.

"You're fucking joking, right Mar?" Charlie ask as David turned away, switching the photo again.

"Nope." Maria said, setting her papers down. "If humans are it's natural prey and it's not evil, its nature. You don't call a fox evil for hunting a rabbit do you?"

"But a rabbit isn't PEOPLE Maria!" Patricia gasped. "We...we're intelligent and have emotions, and that thing **LIKES** scaring us! You saw how it was laughing at Brit!"

"Yea I saw. And I also know humans like to hunt to. Hell, humans will hunt each other for fun rather than food. If this thing does eat humans, maybe it eats fear as well. In that case it's enjoying hunting for its food, just like humans do." She took a breath. "I'm not saying we shouldn't stop it, I'm just saying don't be so fast to label something

as EVIL if it's just nature."

Charlie shook his head as the TV flashed again. Irritated he turned to David, running a hand through his curly ginger hair.

"Could you stop with the picture swapping? It's fraying my nerves!" Charlie practically screamed at David who was sitting in the chair, staring at the TV with wide eyes, shaking his head. Charlie looked at the TV in turn and jumped out of his seat, moving to put the sofa between himself and the image.

"What the fucking shit!?" He called, grabbing everyone else's attention. The other four all stood up, backing away from the screen in front of them. The photos had been replaced by a move, a home film, judging from the quality. In the video they could see the skate-park near Maria's apartment, there were children playing there, all skating and doing tricks. Every single child skated within an inch of the pale-faced clown that was standing in the middle of the bowl, staring at the camera with a buck-toothed, drooly smile.

"Fuck, Dave, Turn the damn thing off!" Charlie screamed, pulling the others close to him as they started to back away. David was already away from his computer, trying to get as far away from the television as he possibly could. The clown took a step forward, grin growing larger and larger as it started to get closer to the camera.

Charlie held onto the back of the sofa, as if hoping the furniture would provide some form of protection from those slowly sharpening teeth. Maria, who hadn't done more than stand up at that point, made her way to the computer and started trying to turn off the connection. Once it said it was no longer streaming to the TV she looked over, It was still coming.

"What do we do, what do we do!?" Brit was screaming, clinging to Mateo who was glancing at the door, as if trying to decide if he would be able to reach it in time. Not a bad idea....but it was already right in front of them, the entire screen filled with that horrific visage.

Maria went over to the hall closet, moving quickly but calmly, pulling out a golf club and moving back towards the Television,

raising the putter above her head and swinging it towards the screen.

There was a loud crashing and sputtering sound as sparks started to fly from the massive hole of shattered glass, left from the impact. Maria pulled the club away before reaching behind the TV and unplugging it, causing most of the sparks to cease.

Maria made her way back to in front of the TV, holding on to the golf-club with both hands as the people behind her took a breath of relief. Charlie took a deep breath, trying to prevent his stomach from emptying onto David's carpet. *Thank FUCK for her.* He thought as he put a hand on Mateo's shoulder to steady himself. But he stopped, his heart instantly jumping to his throat. Since when did Mateo wear satin?

There were simultaneous screams as the clown grabbed Charlie by the throat, pinning him onto the floor. The thing was tall and terrifying, yellow eyes boring right into Charlie's heart as it quickly moved in with it's teeth, sinking into his shoulder. Charlie let out a cry of pain as the teeth went all the way through his thin shoulder, colliding with and crushing the bone.

A high pitched giggle of laughter escaped through that mouth, sounding deep and echoey. The pain was unbearable as it started to thrash, he could hear several other screams in the room around him, but his eyes had closed in an attempt to contain his own. He kicked and pushed, trying to get the thing off of him, but it was too heavy and too strong, his hands simply slid off of the satin of the clown-suit.

He was starting to feel dizzy, wandering when the pain would stop when he heard a loud CLANG! The pain ceased almost instantly, a deep, angry growl mixed with a moaning scream replaced the hungry laughter. Charlie looked up and saw the creature backed up against the door, holding it's head, where a small stream of blood had started to flow...up? Maria was between It and Charlie, the putter already raised to swing again.

Backing up into Mateo's legs and waiting arms, Charlie scrambled to his feet, clinging to his shoulder as he watched Maria swing the club again. This time It caught her, a large white hand wrapping around her wrist, the face snarling at her in an animalistic way. It tossed her

aside, TOSSED HER. She went back nearly three feet off the ground, her back hitting the wall hard. The clown glared at Maria as she slid to the floor, grimacing in pain, before turning its attention back on Charlie.

In a panic, Charlie, Mateo, and Patricia all stumbled over each other in an attempt to put distance between themselves and It, causing all three of them to fall back as it moved in with an unnatural speed. Pinned beneath it again, two screaming voiced in his ear, Charlie felt the cold truth sink into his heart. He was going to die here, no one could save him, they were to scared. He didn't want to die! Help!

Those teeth reached for him again, a deep growl emitting from that throat, before the Clown's head was wrenched back with a slight gagging sound. It stood up, backing away quickly, ramming its back against the wall, causing a pained cry to emit from Maria, who had jumped onto its back to pull it away.

Despite the impact, Maria held on tightly, one arm wrapped around its throat, braced by the other. Maria was tall, nearly six foot, but her feet dangled from her place on its back, legs trying to wrap around its hips for more leverage in her stranglehold. It reached up behind it and grabbed onto her hair with one hand, the other prying at her arms. She was starting to slip, Its frantic movements and power to much for her human strength.

The group of five all just stared in horror as It sank claws into Maria's arm and ripped it away from his throat, nearly ripping her arm clean off. He let out a cry of pain as she slid and stumbled onto the ground just to have It turn and grasp her throat, pushing her forward.

There was a loud crack as her head hit the door, and Charlie stared in horror as she went limp in Its hand. The clown stared at her for a moment before dropping her with a hiss and backing away. It turned to the group, its face seeming almost completely human now, with golden eyes staring harshly at them. For a moment, Charlie felt as if it was judging him....but that thought was replaced by another chill as the clown smiled, his humanlike, high, sinister voice back, rather than that animalistic growl.

"We'll dance again..." He said with a giggle, as if he was commenting

on the weather, and then he was gone.

All was still for a moment, the group just staring at where the clown had vanished from. Charlie looked over at Maria, who was laying on the floor, her brown hair turning dark from blood. His eyes traveled to the door and saw the red liquid dripping from the little brass switch above the knob. Her head had hit the deadbolt.

"Maria!" David was the first one to move, rushing over to Maria's unconscious form and checking her pulse. Slowly the rest of them started to stand, moving cautiously over to her as David pulled out his phone and dialed three numbers.

"Yes! Please my friend's hurt! We were attacked!" David was talking to the police. "Please she...she has a pulse but she's not moving or responding, there's blood! She hit her head! Please....okay...okay yeah..."

Charlie knelt down next to Maria and brushed her hair away from her face, hands still shaking as David continued to give information to the police. She had jumped in to save him, put herself at risk, got hurt....and he just stared while it nearly killed her. He swallowed and started mumbling softly, too softly for the others to hear.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry I was so scared...."

9. Chapter 9

Authors note: A longer chapter written in the middle of the night because of a horrible sleep pattern. I am aware how this particular bit might be getting kinda OOC BUT I like it and its all for fun anyway. And another THANK YOU to all the people who are supporting this story. I hope I continue to entertain! :3

Fearless

These kids were much easier prey than Bill Denbrough and his friends. The lot of them were so scared of something they couldn't quite understand, it made Pennywise wonder why he never went after this age group in earnest before. Past the age of an intense imagination, allowing them to comprehend more, but not quite at the age of pure disbelief. The moment he knew they would be meeting together to discuss him, Pennywise made the decision to use that moment to pick one or two of them off, and instill a permanent fear in the others.

He had followed the woman they called Maria, the one who had drawn his attention the most. Even in that moment when he had been about to take the life of the innocent little Britney, the moment he caught her scent he lost all interest in the little blondie. Coconut and soap, at that moment mixed with the scent of black coffee. It was her scent, and it both starved and satiated him at the same time. It was maddening to see that she had attempted to chase him down, before he vanished from her line of sight.

So he followed her to Britney's home, and watched the two of them interact for the entire night. Maria wasn't the consoling type, clearly. Her attempts were clumsy and awkward, but they seemed to help calm her friend down a little bit. It was sort of cute, in a bizarre way. A woman who could stare him down without a trace of fear, stumbling over words meant to calm someone down. She was socially awkward, but didn't have the same low self esteem as her friend. She knew her strengths and weaknesses, and didn't dwell on either. Pennywise was starting to wonder if she really was human, as she seemed to lack so many of their defining traits.

He had never spent so much time just observing a human. Normally he would hunt for a few hours, searching for certain things to pick out the perfect target, but not that night. For the first time he had to intention of attacking the human he was stalking, at least not then and there. His own hunger, which had been his driving force for so long, had been shoved to the side by an intense and very uncharacteristic curiosity. He wanted to find out what made this human work, her likes and dislikes, her viewpoints, and yes, her fears.

Only a few hours after arriving at her friends house, Maria was tucking her poor, traumatised, exhausted friend into her bed, pulling a bright floral bed cover up over the slim shoulders. Pennywise watched as Maria left the room and started to make her way down stairs, were Britney's parents were waiting.

"Excuse me, Mr. and Mrs. Asters, would it be okay if I used your shower?" She asked, very calm and polite. The two parents smiled and gave her the okay, thanking her AGAIN for taking care of their daughter. Maria gave a small smile and nodded before making her way to the upstairs bathroom, were Pennywise watched as she turned on the shower head, causing steam to start filling up the room. And then she began to undress.

Tall and toned, that would be the best way to describe her. Her skin was naturally pale, but as she removed her shirt and jeans Pennywise could see that she did, actually, have tan lines. She was outside a lot. He couldn't help but stare slightly more intensely as she reached behind her and unfastened her bra, revealing her bare back to him. Her skin was beautiful, and he could actually see the muscle moving under it. Never, in all of his hundreds of years, had he ever thought of a human as anything but food. Now, in the course of only a week or so, this woman had brought two new feelings out in him. Curiosity and an intense desire.

He watched her as she finished undressing, looking over the rest of her body as she unknowingly revealed it. Her legs were very long, and not nearly as spindly as so many other women her age. She had muscle there too, the legs of a woman who hiked through tough terrain, though her skin was also rougher there, discolored by what looked like old scars, the kind you would get after a nasty blister. But

they were old, and mostly faded. He probably wouldn't even have noticed them had he not been so close to her.

She took her hair down out of it's tie and let it fall over her back. It was long and thick, with just enough natural curl to give it that movie-star look. The very tips of her hair ended just above her hips, a slightly lighter shade of brown than the rest of her hair.

Maria rubbed her eye for a second before tossing something in the trash can. Pennywise watched as the single, brown contact lense plopped onto the bag. He frowned and looked back at her as she stepped into the shower. He very quickly, and carefully, went in as well.

He was only inches away from her, he wanted to he could reach out and grab her whenever he wanted. She couldn't see or hear him, of course, and he was good enough at was he did to avoid touching her, or her touching him. The steam in the shower was pretty intense, the water very hot, especially for a summer shower. But he didn't care. All he could look at , in that moment, were her eyes.

They don't match... He thought looking at them. One eye was a beautiful deep green, with golden specks. He almost wanted to call it a very green hazel. Her other eye was brown, dark and rich. It was just another thing that made this woman so special...

Swallowing back his urge to reach out and touch her skin, he stepped away from her as she finished washing and left the shower, stepping onto a towel to prevent getting the floor wet. She dried herself off and slipped on a large T-shirt the Asters had lent her, and her underwear before leaving the bathroom and making her way back to her friend's bedroom.

Pretty much the rest of the night was spent reading. Maria would casually take a book from the shelf, lay down on the floor under the window, and read silently as her friend slept. Pennywise to a seat on the other side of the room, just out of the way of the door, and watched her. For the first time in....as far back as his memory could go, he felt no pang of hunger. For the first time he felt very content with the moment. But he knew, he knew, that as soon as they were all together in a room, talking about how to try and kill him, that

hunger and bloodlust would return. He knew he would have to kill this beautiful, unique woman. But not in that moment. Not that night. For that night, he could simply sit there and enjoy her smell, and how she looked when she fell asleep with moonbeams shining down on her.

The next morning, Pennywise left the little house before either of the girls woke. He needed to get to the other boy, David's, house to see what he was up to. It didn't take him long to find the boy in his room, sitting up and sweating, as if he had just had a bad dream. Pennywise couldn't help but smile at this. *I don't even have to try with them. They're scaring themselves for me.* He watched as the boy left his room and he heard a shower start up. Pennywise entered the room and looked around with a very vague curiosity. Sports trophies, a computer a bed....nothing here held any interest for him, not like she did.

It took a little while, and a very frustrating amount of waiting, before the group was finally gathered in the living room, looking at the TV showing familiar pictures of Derry. This David kid was pretty good at finding information, but that was about it. The reports from that time were, obviously, false and misinformed due to the influence he had over the town for so long, but even with that he could inpoint some crucial information that they had missed.

"Whoever said it's evil?" Maria's voice shocked Pennywise. After everything he had experienced with this woman, how is it that she was STILL shocking him?! She didn't think of him as evil? Even though he had tried to kill two of her friends, and had certainly killed thousands of people over his lifespan. Natural Predator, is what she called him. Not too different from humans. Hunting for his food and enjoying the hunt, like every other predator on this planet. Pennywise had never really thought of it before then, but he did suppose she was right. He had to eat, everything did. So what if he enjoyed the act, the chase? It was natural.

Speaking of the chase. Now was the time for him to make his move. They were already on pins and needles, it shouldn't be hard to scare them, and pick one of them off. The lion always goes for the weakest antelope, right?

The little trick with the TV worked out way better than he had thought it would, sending the majority of the group backing towards him. At least he had learned his lesson last time and blocked the damn door. He almost wanted to laugh when Maria grabbed a golf putter from the closet and just smashed the TV screen, keeping her head, even unplugging it to prevent a fire! It was mildly hilarious.

The group started to calm down and one of them reached out to steady himself on his friend. Pennywise took the opportunity and revealed himself right between them. It was the red-haired kid who had been sitting next to Maria at the graduation who grabbed him. He was close to her, clearly, so Pennywise figured that, if there was any possibility that this woman COULD be scared, this might be the way to do it.

The kid had no muscle at all, Pennywise was able to sink his teeth into him in no time at all. He would have ripped the arm clean off if a sudden whack and a shock of pain didn't hit him in the side of the head. He was tough, very tough, but the shock of a golf club hitting the skull with enough force to fracture it still made him stumble back.

He saw the next attack already coming and raised a hand, catching the thin, but strong arm. He looked up and saw Maria staring at him angrily. He hissed, seeing her this close, this angry, angry at him, made his blood boil slightly. He simply tossed her aside, turning his attention to the ginger boy. He strode forward with his incredible speed and managed to pin three of them underneath him, planning to go directly in for the kill when those arms interfered again. She had jumped onto his back and was attempting to choke him, and doing a pretty damn good job. He pushed backwards, slamming her against the wall before clawing at her arms and forcing her off of him.

She was strong, especially for a human, but he was stronger and heavier. He turned to her and almost stopped. The angry look in her face was gone, she was staring at him now with a look so much more akin to....curiosity. He gritted his teeth and pushed her back, wanting to put her out of the scuffle long enough to take his meal. The cracking sound when her head hit the metal dead-bolt on the door actually made his stomach drop.

Her eyes became unfocused and fluttered closed, he entire body became limp in his hand as the smell of blood reached his nose. Still holding her he turned to the group, expecting them to jump on him to help her...but they didn't. They were all backing away, too scared to help her, even after she had fought for them.

Disgusting things. He thought to himself, allowing the visage of the clown to settle back into a more normal, more human appearance. *They call me a monster for feeding, when they would abandon her.*

He dropped her to the floor and vanished from their view. He had no interest in devouring these diseased creatures in front of him. At the very least, they should be able to get her to a doctor. In the meantime, Pennywise quickly began to withdraw to his lair, quickly moving down into the sewers.

Once in his home he began to pace, snarling curses under his breath, his shape beginning to change, his teeth ripping through his own skin, eyes becoming bloodshot and glowing. He was losing control of his own form in his anger.

"Why nearly die for THEM!" He spat into the empty hall. "They would have let me have her to save their own hides! She jumped on me, hit me, stared me in the eye without blinking and they were ready to run! Cowards!"

He stopped, the echoes of his rant bouncing off the walls of the cavern he had made his home. *But...why do I care? She should be the one I'm frustrated with, not getting scared...why...why am I so angry at them?*

He thought back twenty-seven years, to the "Losers Club" as Richie had liked to call them. He had made them a very, very good offer. Let him take Bill and return to sleep, and he would leave them be. But they were all willing to fight and die for their one friend, and they had been so much younger than this group. That devotion had been his downfall. Whenever he was able to petrify one, another would fight their fear with them.

This group is weaker willed. Pennywise thought, taking a seat at the edge of his little home, wastewater flowing slowly past him in the

bottom of a pipe. *Given the choice, they would all abandon each other to save themselves. Except for Maria. Maria would die to protect them. Maria.....*

Looking upwards, Pennywise could barely see a little bit of light coming down from above, a small outlet put in to relieve the gasses formed down here. *I'll drop by the hospital tonight, to see her. Maybe...maybe I can get some answers there. But for now, I need to feed.*

And so he did. Snatching three different people in one day was probably a little reckless, but once he started to feast, he finally realised just how hungry he really was. The elderly couple and the businessman might be missed, by someone, but that wasn't his concern. He fed on this three course meal and sent them to float.

He waited, rested, for a couple more hours before finally making his way through the pipes and under the hospital. It took longer than expected to find an outlet and enter the hospital than he had expected, but eventually he was roaming through the massive halls, looking for her room. The cold, antiseptic smell was obscuring her scent, and it took way too long before he found the room with the nametag "Reigns"

Stepping inside he half expected to see her friends, or her father, sitting with her, making sure she was okay and safe. But no. No one was in the dark room. The chair was pushed neatly against a far wall, machines were beeping softly as they monitored her vitals. There was a clipboard at the foot of her bed. Pennywise picked it up and started to read it.

Concussion, Skull Fracture, Minor Edema to be monitored. MRI showed damaged Amygdala, though damage was caused by Urbach-Wiethe disease at a young age. Being treated, expect.....emotional abnormalities?

Pennywise looked up at the face in the bed. Her eyes were closed and she had a small oxygen tube going into her nose. Her hair had been tied back and was currently being pushed down by white bandages. She looked very pale but, at that moment, just resting. It wasn't right, though, to see her in that state. He didn't like the pale hospital gown and blankets, making her look far more frail than she really was.

He put the clipboard back in place made his way to her side, pulling the chair over silently to sit there. He stared at her for a moment before reaching out and placing one gloved hand onto the hand of the arm he had nearly ripped off. Her skin was cold, at that moment, and he didn't like it. He had always associated cold with dead and....he didn't want her dead.

Emotional Abnormalities. Could that be the reason why she wasn't afraid? Brain damage caused by a sickness? It seemed ridiculous but....he supposed that it was possible. He shook his head and folded his fingers around hers, his hand only slightly larger than hers.

"What a caring monster."

The voice made him, Pennywise, jump as he turned his head and saw the mismatched eyes staring at him, a small smile on Maria's face.

"Did you come here to kill me?" She asked, calm and gentle, her voice hoarse. He swallowed and shook his head.

"No...I won't kill you." He replied, his voice seeming so quiet in his own ears. She smiled again and the hand he was holding turned and squeezed his back as her eyes shut and she fell back asleep.

10. Chapter 10

Author's Note: Sorry this chapter took so long, in comparison to the other chapters before this. This one was pretty hard to write and I really hope you all like it. I hope with this one some of the warnings from chapter 1 make a bit more sense, if not, I'm sorry, this is my first time really trying to write out this very specific type of story. Thank you all again for your support and I hope to get another chapter up tonight, and maybe a few tomorrow.

Curiosity

Hearing this, apparently, monstrous, murderous clown say that he had no plan to kill her, peaked Maria's growing curiosity about it even more. She still wasn't positive about what had made her jump on his back, maybe just a fierce loyalty to Charlie, but just the action of it felt so, wrong in a bizarre way. The clown's body had been very hot, like when you are opening an oven, for a moment she thought she might get burned from it. But no. All she got was a claw to the arm and a big bump on the back of her head.

That very brief moment of seeing it sitting beside her in the hospital had been enough to severely confound her. She clutched that had, and had felt happy. But why? She knew that if she had been normal, she would have been terrified, but luckily that part of her brain just didn't work right anymore. Instead, anything she should be afraid of, turned into curiosity.

The morning after the incident, Maria woke to an empty hospital room. None of her friends were there, her father wasn't there, even the clown was gone. All that was present was a table holding some basic medical supplies and one red balloon, tied to the handrail of her hospital bed. She stared at it for a moment, reaching one hand up to tug on the thin string slightly, causing it to bounce in the air. The low light in the room gave the rubber an almost liquid appearance, Maria able to see her reflection in it.

She watched as it swayed and bobbed for a few moments before a small clack grabbed her attention. Slowly turning her head to the door she saw David peeking inside. As soon as he saw that she was

awake he gave a big, fairly handsome, grin and stepped inside, a vase with some yellow flowers in his arms.

"Maria...hi." He said softly. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm dizzy and my head hurts, but I'll be fine." She said returning a smile. He started to walk in more when he saw the balloon. His face lost some of his color when he saw it and looked at Maria again, concern clear on his face.

"It's from a friend. Don't worry about it." She explained. David let out a breath he had, apparently been holding. Maria tried not to smile at this, finding it fairly amusing. David walked over and set the flowers on her bedside table before sitting in the chair the Clown had left beside her bed.

"Where's everyone else?" Maria asked. "Are they okay?"

"Yeah! Yeah, everyone's okay. Charlie had a few bruises and scrapes, his arm's gonna be in a sling for a while, but the doctor's said that it would heal as long as he avoided straining it."

Maria smiled and nodded, glad to hear her childhood friend was okay. She sighed and leaned her head back against her pillow, closing her eyes. She felt so tired, and her head was really hurting. All she really wanted to do was go back to sleep, but she figured that would not be a good idea, since a doctor would probably be in at any minute anyway to check on her.

The two of them sat together for a while, occasionally talking about unimportant things such as the latest episode of the Walking Dead, or if the rain would keep up. Out of sheer curiosity she had asked how her father had reacted to hearing she had gotten hurt, and she had to admit the answer didn't surprise her.

Apparently he had asked if she would die, and she they said no, he went back to his nap. That was pretty much her father in a nutshell. But, in some ways, that was okay. She liked taking care of herself, being responsible, for the most part, for her own life. It wasn't glamorous, and she admits to letting almost every part of her house besides her room become a pigsty, but she was able to live in relative

happiness.

After a short while a doctor did, indeed, come to check up on her injury. And he brought a friend in the form of a trauma psychiatrist. They had to ask David to come back later, as they had to do some tests that would take quite some time. David complied, quite grumpily, and gave Maria a firm squeeze of the hand before leaving the room.

The tests included a brainscan and several questions about how she felt. Her headache, dizziness, and fatigue were all signs of her concussion and the swelling that had resulted from the trauma. Luckily it would seem that the swelling had already started to go down, and he said that the pain and what not should go away in a couple of days.

The real pain in the ass was the psychiatrist. He had been brought in to help her deal with the trauma caused by being attacked and to assess her mental wellness.

"My head got cracked open on a rock, my brains are all swollen and scrambled, how the hell will you know if I'm mentally sane or not?" She had asked after the Nth question about how she was feeling. The doctor simply gave her a soft, obviously practiced, smile.

"We are aware of all the physical trauma, and will be taking it into account." He replied before looking at his notes again. "I know you must have been terrified. It was very brave of you to protect your friend like you did."

"I wasn't scared." She said dryly. "I can't be scared. Check my medical records and you'll see why."

The man frowned slightly, clearly observing her behavior. She complied and answered all of his questions as honestly as she could and after nearly two hours the Mind Man got up and left the room, stepping just outside to talk with her actual Doctor.

"The girl shows no sign of mental or emotional trauma from the attack." Maria could hear him saying. She frowned, her usual curiosity peeking up again. Very carefully she pulled the sheets off of

herself and slowly stood up, using the nearby furniture for support as she made her way closer to hear better.

"I mean none. The girl faced down a lunatic with a knife, fought him, nearly died and her mental state is like that of a kid who had a candybar stolen. She has no fear?"

"Yes. She was diagnosed with a very rare genetic disorder that destroyed the part of her brain that regulates the fear responses." Her doctor explained. She could hear Mind Man sigh slightly.

Apparently that explained a good portion of his concerns. Without being afraid it's kinda hard to be traumatised, though she supposed it would still be possible under certain circumstances. She heard the two of them start to walk away and she started to turn to make her way to her bed.

That had been a bad idea. The turning motion caused her head to spin twice as fast as her body, or so it felt. Her vision went black for a second as she felt herself start to fall. She reached out to find something to hold onto and she met a hand, arms and chest. All were covered in a soft material, and all were burning hot.

The smell alone was unmistakeable. At first she had compared it to the smell of a cellar, but at that moment it reminded her more of old, unkept books. Something that was too damaged to read, but still fascinating nonetheless.

She took a moment for her head to settle down and her vision to come back to her. Once her consciousness was fully regained she found that she was leaning against the clown that had caused the head injury in the first place. Both of her hands were pressed against his forearms, his hand having apparently reached out and grasped onto her waist to steady her. Her head was pressed against his chest, a single orange palm palm staring her in the face. She slowly looked up and saw his face.

The same paint and markings, with the same red hair, he was looking at her with those golden eyes. He looked as human as he had back at the graduation, with slightly bucked teeth peeking out from between his lips, rather than the rows of angry fangs she had seen before.

Now that she was steady she sighed and, very weakly, slapped his chest.

"Thanks for scrambling my brain, Ronald McDonald." She muttered, trying to sit up straighter, but those hands held her in place as she tried to take a step back. She frowned and looked at him, trying to read what was going on in those golden eyes as the hands clasped on her waist tightened and loosened, as if he wasn't sure if he wanted to hold on or let her go.

"Are you going to kill me?" She asked, just like the night before. There was a pause and for a moment, Maria thought he would. But he just shook his head.

"No...I won't kill you. I...." He was acting almost....awkward. It was kinda cute, like a puppy learning to play properly.

"Well if you aren't gonna kill me can ya help me back into bed?" She asked, feeling another wave of dizziness coming on. The face he made was downright hilarious, as if no one had ever asked him to do anything before. *Well...considering he eats people this might actually be a first for him.* She thought, looking at the face that was a mix of confusion and mildly offended. Nonetheless, the Clown did take her arm and started to walk her back to bed, slowly. He was quite a bit taller than her, she herself already standing at almost six foot. If she had to guess she would say he was probably in the area of 6'5" 6'6". He was sturdy though, and was able to keep her steady all the way back to the bed where she first sat down before swinging her legs up and under the covers. She got herself settled into bed, raising the back of it to a comfortable upright position and pulling the blankets up to about her hips as the clown stepped back and watched her. Once settled she leaned her head back and gave a tired sigh before looking back at the clown.

"Do you got a name?" She asked, folding her hands together over her waist and letting them rest there. The clown gave a small twitch, a light jingle emitting from him.

"No real name." He replied after a moment. "But there are those that call me Pennywise." His voice cracked slightly, going from something that had been shockingly dull into something more pleasant a sweet.

The type of voice that would draw children towards him to buy a balloon.

"Pennywise, huh?" Maria said, watching as he started to walk around her in the room, moving and sitting back in the chair he had been in the other night. She could see it happen, he was settling into a...form? A personality? Whatever it was it was bizarre and interesting, like seeing how sand settles in water.

"I'm Maria." She said and he gave a big smile.

"I know." He replied and she raised an eyebrow. *Creepy. Right? Is it creepy or eerie? Whatever.*

"So, Pennywise." She started. "If you aren't here to kill me then why are you here?" She asked outright, and the smile dropped. He stared at her intently for a while, some complicated thought clearly going through his mind. She wondered how he saw her. Was she currently a deer asking the huntsman why he's there? Or was it something even less than that, maybe a steak asking why you want to eat it? She wondered how a human would feel, if a pig from a slaughterhouse suddenly started to have casual conversation with them.

"I don't know." He replied, his voice deeper now. It still had that bizarre pleasantness to it, but it seemed more adult, and more serious. She wondered if this was close to his real voice. "You...confuse me."

"Right back at ya." She said, tilting her head. He shook his, violent jerks of his neck that looked very unnatural.

"I should confuse you." He said, brows lowering to a sinister frown. "You shouldn't understand me. But you...I have watched and hunted humans for centuries, I should understand you."

"What makes you think you ever could?" Maria asked. "Humans are capable of very rapid evolution, and our bodies and minds can make us all very different from each other. There is no such thing as a normal human."

He let out a small growl and looked away from her, his gloved hands

wringing together as his elbows rested on his knees, the frills around his wrists swaying. Maria watched him struggle with whatever was going on inside his head, thinking hard before asking her next question.

"Did you intend to hurt me?" She asked, a frown playing on her own brow as she struggled to understand, at least a little more. Gold eyes raised and met hers before his head shook again.

"I was going to save you for last." He said, licking his lips slightly. "But I can't. I can't scare you so I cannot feast on you."

"So...you eat fear as well as meat?" She clarified and he nodded. "Well....sorry for denying you your dinner, but it's not really my choice to not be afraid."

A deep chuckle was his response. He was very confusing, for sure. She smiled and closed her eyes, leaning her head back against the pillow. She was feeling very, very tired, and she was okay with sitting there in silence for a little bit as Pennywise collected his thoughts.

The silence extended for quite a while, the only indication that Pennywise was still there was the soft ruffle of his clown suit. Maria could feel herself starting to fall asleep in the comfort of the silence when his voice pulled her back.

"Do you really not think of me as evil?"

The question was quite the shock. Her eyes opened and she turned to him. He looked far less anxious now, his eyes and voice now steady on her. She shook her head and readjusted her sitting position.

"No. I don't think you're evil." She said, the tiredness coming out in her voice. "I think you are doing what is in your nature to do. And nature isn't evil, it's neutral."

Pennywise seemed to think on this for a moment before nodding. Standing up on his long legs he brushed off his suit, causing the ruffled collar to bounce slightly, before striding up to the head of her bed. He leaned over her slightly, as if trying to look her as directly in the eye as he could, and she stared back. He was very close to her

now, she could practically feel that intense heat emanating from him again.

"You should sleep." He said, the slight smile playing on his mouth and she felt, for the first time, that it was a real smile. "You have my word that I will leave your friends be, for the time being." Maria raised an eyebrow and moved her hand, placing on top of the gloved one that was resting on the rail of her bed, right next to the balloon.

"Will I see you again?" She asked, causing both of them to blink for a moment. *Well that's a fucking first, I just surprised myself. What the fuck am I asking?* Pennywise swallowed a second and thought before giving a hesitant nod.

"If....you want to." He said, cautiously pulling his head and body back slightly. "If you want to I will come....if not...I'll come anyway and just stay out of sight."

Maria laughed, a strange sound even to her own ears, a small throbbing starting at the back of her head from the force of the laugh.

"If you're gonna be there anyway then yeah I want to see you." She said, her voice lighter than it had been in a long while. "Better than you probably creeping on me in the shower! Fuck, you're a creepy guy."

Pennywise smiled back at her, his eyes seeming to admit a small light from them. *Does that mean he's happy?* She thought as his hand pulled away from her own and he started to step away.

"Be careful Maria, Reigns." He said, a lilt of amusement in his voice, one that matched the original visage she had seen at graduation. Something that was not what it seemed. "Be careful, you might end up floating like all the rest after all..."

And he was gone. The guy was good at dramatic exits, if nothing else. She stared at the place he had been standing and ran her fingers up the thread on the balloon. He could tell, he had smelt it. She knew that. Her heart was pounding mildly as a feeling she hadn't experienced since she was seven years old rose in her throat and

chest. *What do you know, Pennywise. You did manage to make me afraid. But I don't fear floating. I'm afraid I'm Falling.*

11. Chapter 11

Authors note/Warning: Adult themes ahead. You have been warned.

Curiosity and Logic

The two weeks spent in the hospital were near torture for Maria to withstand. She had never really liked hospitals to begin with, everything seemed to have a dull humming noise to it. While the doctors frequently told her that the best thing she could do was sleep, she found it very hard to do so. Either a Doctor was coming in to check on her, a nurse to change her bandages. Or her friends would show up, bearing various gifts like flowers, books, balloons, and so on. She knew they meant well, but in all honesty they were very loud and it made her head hurt constantly.

David seemed to be there all the god damned time. He would visit her multiple times a day, each time bringing a new gift. He would sit with her for hours, saying that she could go to sleep if she wanted, but she never did. They would watch TV together, hearing the latest name to have vanished.

At one point Maria went ahead and asked David if "The Clown" had shown up again to any of them. David assured her that there had been no sight of It since the fight in his living room, though, clearly, it was still hunting in this area. David mentioned that, one of the reasons he was with her so frequently, was because he worried about her, being stuck there all alone in bed, hurt. She was a perfect target for that "Monster" as David put it.

"Honestly, David. Go home and rest. I'm probably safer here than I would be at home." She told him one night. He was looking pale, and had dark circles growing under his eyes. It was clear that he hadn't been sleeping, but no one knew the cause of the insomnia. David mentioned having bad dreams but that was all. Everyone, save Maria, started talking about if It could go into someone's head and make them have bad dreams.

It had been hard on all of them. Maira was all too aware of how pale and thin her friends were starting to get, and she did her best to

encourage them to take care of themselves while she was recovering.

"I need you guys to stay healthy." She had told them at one point. Even Patricia, who had never really gotten along with Maria, had seemed to respond to that. Apparently watching a five-foot Ten girl actively attack a monster clown to protect a friend can inspire a level of respect. It took some time, but eventually the group started to act like normal, talking out other things, such as clothes or TV, Patricia and Britney fawning over this brand and that, while the boys would chat about sports or comic books. It almost felt like being back in the high school cafeteria at times, bringing back a bizarre nostalgia to the group since summer started, only a few weeks ago.

The best part of her time in the hospital was easily the time she managed to spend with Pennywise, the human devouring creature that wore the guise of a clown. Saying it outloud would have sounded absolutely bonkers, but it was true. He would always show up in the middle of the night, when the halls and rooms were dark and quiet, and her door could be closed without anyone paying much mind.

They didn't do or say much in their time together, it was simply spent in quiet observation. Sometimes, while Maria was asleep, Pennywise would stand from his seat and observe her closely, and in great detail. He would take small mental notes on how she tended to lay, usually on her right side with the pillows bunched under her head. He would try and guess what she was dreaming about based off of how her face moved, and the noises she made. He even went so far as to touch her hair, feeling how soft it was, despite how dry it had gotten due to hospital shower amenities. He would very gently touch her cheek, feeling how warm or cold she was, and how soft her human skin could be. But most often, he would hold her hand, like he had the first night. Gently placing his hand on hers, nothing forceful or restraining, just a minor amount of contact between two living beings.

And sometimes Maria would observe him while he thought she was asleep. She would listen and sometimes watch through barely opened eyes. He would stand and walk around the room, often looking at the various things David had brought her, mumbling things to himself. There were times when she caught him looking at her, golden eye

surprisingly intense as they looked at every part of her, as if scanning her. At one point when he was closely observing her face she could not contain herself and started laughing. It had surprised him slightly but in the end they both were laughing about.

It was strange how normal it seemed to just spend time like this, even on those days when no words were spoken. Maria had come to find comfort in the way he smelled, making it much easier for her to fall asleep rather than when she was stuck with nothing but the cold antiseptic. Sometimes she would ask him something, trying to learn a little bit about him, but his answers were often vague, or he simply avoided them. She supposed he wasn't used to just telling people about himself.

On one of the nights when he had decided he wanted to observe her a bit more and learn about humans, she remembered asking if she could touch his face. He seemed almost hesitant about it but he did comply, leaning forward enough for her to reach out and place her hands on his cheeks. His skin was also very soft, and when she looked at her hands again, they were clean. It wasn't actually makeup on his skin, it was just his skin. Even his face was superheated, making Maria comment about how he would be great to have around in the winter.

Two weeks after having been hurt, Maria got the news that she would soon be let out of the hospital. She would still need to take it easy, but she should be okay. Now that her head injury was mostly healed, what was really left was her arm. Pennywise's claws had really shredded up her muscles and tendons, making it very hard for her to move her hand much, but Maria suspected it wouldn't be too hard to find help.

It was her last day in the hospital, and all of her friends were there to see her and help her plan for the next day. Patricia and Britney had brought her a set of clothes for tomorrow, and were planning on taking most of her belongings home that night so they had less to deal with tomorrow. According to Patricia, Maria getting out of the hospital was occasion for celebration and a party, and since everyone else agreed, Maria complied to joining them, so long as it was nothing crazy. It was Mateo that finally brought up the elephant in the room.

"But....what are we gonna do about the clown?" He asked and everyone went silent. He look apologetic but continued. "I mean...yeah it's left us alone so far but it's clearly still out there, taking people. Every day there are new names added to the list. I think the total's almost at twenty at this point. We actually know about it, don't you think we should do something?"

Everyone looked scared at the prospect of going against Pennywise again, Maria was just conflicted. In the last few weeks she had been spending allot of time with "IT" as the group had referred to him. Her time had only helped to confirm that Pennywise wasn't just some evil thing out for blood, he was a creature MADE to hunt humans. He was hungry and just trying to survive, it wasn't a sport for him. To be fair, neither one of them had brought up the missing people or what had happened to them. It was like the unspoken taboo they had agreed on before even starting to talk. Maria knew it was him doing it, and she also knew they were dead, but she had never been fully bothered by it. Like, just because she likes sheep doesn't mean she's gonna be bothered because someone butchers them for a lambchop.

"I don't want to think about it right now." Maria said in response to Mateo's question. "Right now I just want to get out of this hospital and try and heal up. We can discuss it later."

Pretty much everyone agreed on that statement, all of them looking fairly relieved that she wasn't jumping at the chance to take It on. The only one who looked more anxious than relieved was David, who seemed almost angry. Maria, if she had to guess, would say he almost WANTED to fight Pennywise. Why? She had no idea, the kids was strange at times, but she knew for a fact that it was a bad idea, and that she really didn't want to at that moment.

The group hung around the hospital for most of the day, until one by one they started to leave, each of them taking some of the flowers, books, etc with them. David was the last to leave, staying until the hospital was starting to grow dark. He looked at Maria and stood near the side of her bed, taking her hand in his own for a moment.

"I'm so glad you're okay, Maria." He said softly, his thumb brushing against the top of her hand. "I'll never forgive it for hurting you. I'm gonna kill It. I promise."

Maria said nothing as David leaned down and kissed her cheek before wishing her a good night and leaving the room. Once she was alone she sat up in bed and wiped away the spot on her cheek where David had kissed her. It hadn't felt right, for him to do that, or say that. She looked at the balloon that was tied to her bed. In two weeks it hadn't deflated or sunk at all, unlike all of the other balloons she had received from David. It was still floating there, a constant reminder of the fact that, whatever Pennywise was, he wasn't human.

She sighed and grabbed a pair of scissors sitting next to her and cut the string, taking the balloon into her hand and looking at it closely. It really was a strange shade of red, not the bright cherry red most balloons are made with. This one was darker, like the same shade of red as the markings on Pennywise's face. She smiled a little thinking of that and let the string go, watching as it floated up and bounced against the darkened fluorescent lights.

She just stared at it for a moment, as it rolled against the ceiling because of the air conditioner, the string swaying in the air when a familiar scent reached her. She smiled and looked down from the ceiling to see Pennywise standing in front of her. He had almost looked like a sad smile on his face, his normally glowing eyes seeming slightly dim.

"Your friends want to kill me." He said, staring at her. "Are you going to help them?"

"No." Maria answered, almost instantly. "Not unless you give me no choice. If I can, I'll convince them to forget about it and be happy to be alive but....."

"I doubt that kid David would listen to that." Pennywise answered with a slight giggle. She wandered if he had been stalking her friends after all. Maria smiled and slid out of bed, her bare feet hitting the cold tile of the floor. Pennywise reached out to steady her, but the dizziness was completely gone at this point, and Maria was fine. It did not stop her, however, from taking one gloved hand. The motion seemed to surprise Pennywise, but after a second his fingers wrapped around her own and she stepped towards him.

What are you doing Maria? She thought to herself as she stood only

inches away from him, her hand in his as she looked up at him. *I'm....curious. But, this isn't smart....it's....not smart at all.*

Maria and Pennywise stared at each other for a few moments, both attempting to read the other and figure out what was going to happen next. Maria was fighting between her curiosity and her logic, trying to decide what to do next, while Pennywise was simply trying to figure out what she wanted, hell what HE wanted.

Pennywise was the first one to make a gamble and put his hand on Maria's waist, pulling her in closer to his body. She was surprised, but she didn't fight the motion at all. The heat felt nice in comparison to the rest of the room. She leaned against his chest and let his arms wrap around her shoulders, creating the sensation of being wrapped in an electric blanket. They simply stood there for a while, that comfortable silence having returned. Maria took in a deep breath through her nose, feeling herself relax even more at his smell. She heard him take in a similar breath, though his face was in her hair.

"You don't smell like coconut anymore..." He said, sounding slightly disappointed. She laughed and pulled away just enough to look up at him.

"I haven't had access to my usual shampoo." She said, guessing that it was the reason for that smell (It was the only thing that made sense to her.) She smiled and then thought for a moment before biting her lip. "Speaking of which...I need to take a shower."

"Ah..." Pennywise pulled away, leaving Maria's skin feeling cold. He stepped away, and nodded. "I'll wait here while you do that then..."

Maria nodded and started to walk passed Pennywise, grabbing a clean gown and underwear as she went towards the small shower in her room. As she sat her belongings down on the sink counter, she looked at the bandages on her arm and turned back to Pennywise.

"Um...could you help me untie the back of my gown?" She asked. "My arm's not working too right at the moment. *Maria! That's stupid! Stop, now! You don't have fear so use logic, LOGIC! Despite how he looks he's not HUMAN. Idiot!* Maria chastised herself as Pennywise looked at her, surprise on his face before he nodded and stepped into the small

room with her. She turned around and pulled her hair off to one side as she felt hands pull at the tie at the base of her neck. Maria pressed her hands against her chest as the shoulders of her gown fell off, managing to keep it up as she turned to Pennywise again and looked up at him.

"Thanks." She said with a smile. He nodded and stared at her for a moment, one hand coming forward to brush her hair back. The head of that hand made her nerves all flair up as her mind continued in its war with itself. *Curiosity, Logic, Curiosity, Logic.*

"Maria...." Pennywise's voice was deeper than usual and his eyes were starting to glow ever so slightly. He looked hungry, and she started to wonder if he was actually going to kill her now. He leaned in and pressed his face against the crook of her neck, taking in another deep breath. His body was tense as his hands slid down her shoulders.

Curiosity, Logic, Curiosity, Logic.

Maria found one of her hands reaching up and pressing against his chest, her forehead leaning forward against his shoulder as one glove hand reached around her waist, the face continuing to nuzzle her. She felt an ache growing between her legs at the contact. In all the time they had spent together over the last two weeks, this is certainly the closest they had gotten, and certainly the most they had ever touched each other.

Curiosity, Logic, Curiosity, Logic.

Pennywise pulled away from her again, his eyes glowing very brightly as one hand slid up and pulled at her own, the one that was holding the front of her hospital gown up. It wasn't forceful, or demanding. It was soft, gentle, like a question. Despite the intensity of his stare, his face was calm and poised, still observing her for her reactions. Maria looked at him, felt the hand on her own, knowing the question he was asking her and her own debate still ringing in her head.

Curiosity, Logic, Curiosity, Logic...Fuck Logic.

Maria let go of the gown and reached her other hand up to

Pennywise's face, looking at his eyes as the gown fell down onto a crumpled mess at her feet. He swallowed and blinked in surprise before leaning in and firmly pressing his lips against her own. The kiss was intense, his hot tongue instantly pushing its way into her mouth as he picked her up, her legs wrapping around his hips as he pushed her against the wall of the shower. One of his hands reached out and turned the knob, causing hot water to pour on both of them as they continued to kiss.

One hand was all he needed to keep her up, her back braced against the wall as his other hand began to explore her body. She watched as he raised his hand to his mouth and pulled the glove off with his teeth, that had become long and sharp again. His hand was the same color as his face, the same painted white, but as he ran it over her breasts and tummy, the heat was so much more intense than it had been with the glove. She carefully laid her head against the shower wall and let out a deep moan as his fingers explored everywhere they could reach, causing the ache between her legs to grow more and more intense as she rocked against his hips.

She never felt a hand go between her legs to allow it, but it wasn't long before she felt a hard heat press against her womanhood. She looked down to see a very human-like appendage start to press inside. She bit her lip and lifted her hips a bit more, for a second supporting her weight on her own legs before letting herself fall down onto him. It wasn't gentle or romantic, it was feral. There was no waiting or starting slow, once he was inside her he took her fiercely, pinning Maria between himself and the shower wall. Her moans were deep and gravely, almost matching with his supernatural growls that emitted from his throat. She tried to keep her eyes on him, watching as parts of his visage of a clown faded into something more, a bright light seeming to shine from both his eyes and his throat, long jagged teeth gritted together as he pushed into her with a force she had never experienced before. Her eyes had to close, her hands slipping as she tried to hold onto him to brace against the ferocity of his thrusts.

Seeming to notice he pulled away from the wall and pulled out, setting her on the floor. It was almost like she knew what he had intended, as he had barely pulled at one side of her hip before she

had turned around and braced her hands on the handicap rail of the shower. He mounted her again in no time, the new position aiding to the animalistic nature of this mating. Maria had always thought that being taken from behind would be demeaning or humiliating, but she didn't feel that way now. In that moment, it was the most rational way to do it, and definitely pleasurable.

The change in the angle was intense, as was the force with which he was able to pound into her. He had bent over her completely, his entire body pressed against her as his arms wrapped around her front to continue to pleasure her with his hands as well. The satin of his suit rubbing against her back and legs created a very unique sensation, as did the intense heat rubbing, teasing, and slamming into all of her most sensitive places.

The cry she emitted when he finished inside her was much louder than either one of them had expected, the heat of his seed being to the point of almost painful, but not quite. His arms tightened around her waist as he thrust in deep and hard, grinding against her as he spilled out inside her. The growling whine he gave out was almost sad, to Maria's ears, as if he hadn't wanted to finish so soon, but she could already feel her legs starting to give out underneath her.

As the shuddering stopped, Maria slowly became accustomed to the head inside her, her body no longer trying to reject it, it accepted it, making her head feel all fuzzy with her bizarre, slow orgasm that just sort of came and went gradually. She slid on the floor of the shower, lowering to the ground with Pennywise still holding her from behind, having not left her yet as they both took a seat. They both just sat on their knees for a long while, breathing hard, trying to re-form some sense of conscious thinking. Eventually, and reluctantly, Pennywise pulled out of her and sat back on his heels, staring at Maria as she turned around and sat on her ass, leaning against the wall as she looked at Pennywise. His face was human again, looking slightly dazed with a small smile as he looked at her.

Her shoulders started to shake and she pressed her hand against her mouth as the giggles started to rise in her throat. The laughter was light, and very similar to the way Pennywise would giggle sometimes as her hand moved from her mouth to her eyes to brushing her wet hair away from her face. Pennywise had started to laugh as well,

light and trilling, blending into the hiss of the shower.

"What the fuck just happened?" Maria asked through her laughter. She saw as Pennywise shrugged and shook his head, red hair plastered against the white skin. His grin was larger than ever as he reached forward and brushed the back of his hand against her cheek. She leaned in to the touch as they both calmed down.

It took a few moments but eventually they were able to stand up and turn off the shower, neither one of them really having the energy to wash at that moment. Pennywise helped Maria put her gown back on and walked with her back to the bed, were, for the first time, he laid down with her. She laid on her side, but instead of pillows being bunched up under her head, she rested against his shoulder, and she fell asleep, without them exchanging a word.

12. Chapter 12

Authors note; Thank you so much for your patience with this chapter, I know it took me a while to get it up and going. I hope you all enjoy this chapter and I want to give a huge thanks to those new followers of the story after last chapter. You guys are amazing. I hope to see more reviews and favorites as this story continues, it's great to be writing again.

Thoughts

Pennywise

"What the fuck just happened" Was probably the best damn question Pennywise had heard in a long time. He still wasn't too sure, but he had a vague idea. He had made love, to a human woman. Why? He wasn't completely sure himself, it's not like it was something he had done before in his many MANY years, but he had done it now, and to add to the list of new experiences, he was currently laying in a hospital bed with that same woman curled up against his side, using his shoulder as a pillow.

He looked down at her face, brushing a few stray strands of wet hair away from her eyes as he examined her again. She could have said no. Despite what he was and what he did he could honestly, and proudly, say he had never been a rapist. But no, she had given consent, very clear consent, and she had taken him in without so much as a complaint about anything.

Humans being so fragile, and knowing his own strength in comparison, as soon as the sex haze had faded he had been terrified that he might have hurt her in some way. So, now that she was asleep, he took the opportunity to very carefully look her over. No bruises, no scratches or tears, she had taken no damage what so ever from the ordeal. Once he was satisfied he settled back down at her side, just watching her face as she slept.

She seemed to be sleeping easy in that moment, ironic considering Pennywise had a tendency to cost people their sleep. But right then, her face was peaceful, a small smile playing on her lips as she

breathed deep and heavy. It almost made Pennywise want to settle down and fall asleep next to her.

Sleep...it wasn't a pleasant a thought as it used to be anymore. He had only woken up a few months ago, but he had been feeding quickly and in large amounts, in fear of some other group pushing him back to hibernation early again. His original plan was to stay awake for six months, his general average, though he could always try to stretch it out. He guessed the longest he would be able to stay was December, and by that time he would be very ready for his sleep. But....

Twenty Seven Years is a long time for humans. He thought looking down at this strange girl. She would be in her mid-forties by the time he came back. That would give her plenty of time to forget, to find herself a husband, or wife. Even have kids. As soon as he went to his sleep, she would be gone to him. He wondered if there was anything he could do, but the only thing that came to mind was risky, and the thought of doing it made his gut sink. He shook his head and pressed his face against her hair, taking in her scent. Even without the coconut, she smelled amazing, and that was something he would never forget.

He held her close to his chest, letting his long fingers twirl in her hair for a few minutes, thinking back to what her friends had said earlier in the day. The David kid out right wanted to kill him, and the others to stop him. Despite how scared they were of him, seeing her get so badly hurt had, apparently, lit up some form of anger in them. He looked down at her again. She said she would only help them if he left her with no other choice, but he had to wonder, what if her friends didn't listen to her when she tried to talk them down? Would she just stand back and let it play out? If they came after him, Pennywise would kill them. She had to know this. Would she come along and try and keep them alive? That might mean being forced to fight her again. It wasn't something he wanted to think about.

"What are you going to do, Maria?" He asked in the silent room just as he heard the small clack of the door starting to open. He turned and saw David walk in. He frowned at the boy, who at that moment was oblivious to Pennywise's presence. It was awfully late for him to be there, besides hadn't he just left? Why was he back? Pennywise

had many questions, but for that moment he just layed there and watched as the boy came forward towards Maria.

David came right up next to the bed and reached out, brushing his fingers through her hair for a brief moment, Pennywise felt anger grow in his stomach as that boy's hands touched her. He watched with dangerous eyes as the boy started muttering under his breath, as if to himself. Pennywise could hear every word.

"It's okay, Maria. I'll kill it. I'll make sure It never has you." He muttered such things over and over again, his unblinking eyes never leaving Maria. Pennywise wanted to show himself, to reveal that he had already had her, and then rip his throat out. But he didn't he held back. He didn't think Maria knew about THIS, and thus she could still look at this guy as her friend. And he had made a promise.

Promises be damned, though, when the bastard actually moved in to kiss her cheek. Pennywise had to dig his claws into the bed to top himself from attacking right then and there, but it didn't stop the very audible growl from leaving his throat. David clearly heard it as he instantly stepped away from Maria and looked behind him, pulling something small and metallic from his pocket. Pennywise slipped out of the bed and walked around so that he was right in front of the boy, looking down at the small pocket knife in his hand.

It would be so easy to just kill him now. It would be quick and clean, then he would drag him away to feast on later and clean up the mess here.....it would be simple and quiet. But no. Pennywise simply stayed there, hands clenched at his side, letting out a deep rumbling growl whenever David tried to get close to Maria again. He continued the pattern until David eventually left the room, looking angry and scared. Once alone again Pennywise looked to Maria and gently brushed his hand against her cheek.

"Be careful of him." He muttered before stepping away and turning towards the door. "I'll see you tomorrow, Maria." And he left that hospital room, never to return to it.

David

Maria had been acting so much different since the attack. She had

stopped talking about the clown and the disappearances all together, as if she wanted to forget about them. Whenever it was brought up she just changed the subject, or said that she didn't want to talk about it. David didn't like it one bit. It was like her mindset had changed after almost being killed, which he supposed made sense, but it still wasn't like the fearless Maria he loved. It was as if, by hurting her, that damned clown had managed to take her away from him after all.

He would visit her as often as he possibly could, coming several times a day, bringing her things that he hoped were good enough to let her know how much he cared. Perhaps it was a bit too much though, he noticed. At times he seemed to annoy her, noticing her absently messing with the balloon her friend had tied to her bed. What kind of friend was it who had given it to her, anyway? She frequently seemed to be lost in thought, or looking around the room as if expecting someone to be there. Did she have a boyfriend? He didn't think so, she had never mentioned one. The more he saw that balloon, the more he wandered where it had come from.

On the last night before she was to go home, David had left her just before the Hospital went into its night shift, all the lights were turning off as he walked down the silent halls and out the door, towards his car. He would have stayed there all night if he could, but he didn't think she would appreciate that. Besides, she needed her rest. He would see her tomorrow anyway, right?

He got into his car and turned on the ignition, looking at his steering wheel as he sat there, letting the engine run on, and on and on. He had been sitting in his car for a little over an hour before turning it off and making his way back inside. He had to check on her just one more time before he could go home and sleep. He was worried about her, nothing more. So he opened the door to the hospital again, the nurse at the reception desk gave him a curious look but said nothing as he walked into the elevator.

Her room was dark and quiet when he opened the door. The dreaded balloon was floating in one corner, just sort of swaying there. Maria was asleep on her bed, curled up on her side like always. Her hair was wet and she was in a different hospital gown. If David had come in just a little earlier he would have caught her in the shower. He

swallowed the thought and made his way over to Maria, gently stroking her hair as he muttered his promise to her again and again.

She looks so peaceful right now. He thought as he looked at her face, noting how she seemed mildly flushed with a small smile. He had never had the opportunity before now, so he figured he might as well. He leaned down to kiss her cheek, something small and innocent, and then he would leave. His lips were less than an inch away from her skin when he heard the deep, guttural growl in the room, so close it could have been right in front of his face. He instantly pulled away and turned around, pulling out his new pocket knife as he tried to look around and see what he knew was there.

The room was completely empty, so far as he could see, and silent once again. His hand was shaking, he was so scared of that noise. He turned to look back at Maria, who was still sleeping quietly. He gave a small smile and moved to go towards her again when the growl returned, causing him to whip around again.

It happened over and over again, every time he tried to move towards his Maria, the growling would return. Sometimes louder, sometimes more quiet. He didn't know what to do at that point. If it was there, why wasn't it attacking? Was it just messing with him, trying to fray his nerves? Probably, and it was working like a fucking charm. At times it almost seemed like it was warning him to stay away from Maria, but that couldn't be true....could it?

Memories of his nightly dreams came flooding back to him. Each was the same, every night, walking through sewer tunnels, finding his dead friends and ending with Maria, being taken by that horrible thing. He had to shake the image out of his head, it wasn't possible. She was smarter than to open her legs for such a thing, it wasn't even human. Such a thought was sinful and unnatural, he had to shake it off.

He looked at Maria one more time and muttered good night under his breath before taking the warnings and leaving the room. The door closed silently behind him, only the faintest click as it latched. The sound seemed to be like the lock on a secret, something to quiet and final that only a few people would even know of its existence. He swallowed again and closed his eyes, running his fingers through his

hair as he started to walk down the hallway once again, the sound of his own footsteps echoing in his ears.

Patricia

Patricia had never expected Maria to jump on the damn thing! The girl was completely nuts! Patricia had been trying to get as far away from it as she possibly could when it had jumped on Charlie. She had never seen anything like it before in her life, and knowing that this thing had killed Patrick made it all the worse.

She wasn't as strong as David, or as smart of Brit, so her best solution to the problem was to try and stay alive by getting the fuck away from it. So when she saw Maria actively attack it to get it away from Charlie, she was absolutely baffled. The girl had a good swing, and was certainly a lot stronger than she was, but it was clear that she had some loose screws in her head.

She had gone with the rest of the group to the hospital, sitting and waiting in one of those super quiet rooms while the doctors worked on Maria. Patricia had no clue what exactly had happened, only that she had hit her head and went out cold. So she sat and waited, looking around the room at the others and trying to gage their thoughts.]

Brit was probably the worst off in terms of fright. She was just sitting on a sofa, hugging herself and shaking with fright. Mateo wasn't too far behind her, though, even as he tried to comfort her Patricia could see his own shaking form, and pale face. Charlie was deep in thought about something, but there was no guessing what it was. *I guess the kid DID just almost get eaten by a clown....* She thought to herself, not even wanting to imagine what her mental state would be in had she been in his shoes.

And then there was David. Big, hunky, sweet sweet David. Patricia had been trying to get her hands on that boy for two years, ever since he had become the superstar jock of the school. Her flirting, the way she dressed and did her makeup were all certainly, at least in part, an attempt to gain his attention. But he never seemed interested in her.

At that moment David was pacing back and forth in the room, biting

on his nails and muttering something under his breath that she couldn't quite make out. He seemed to be really, Really worried about Maria. Well, they all were, even Patricia who wasn't the biggest fan of the tomboy, but David seemed to be on the verge of a panic attack like Brit. Patricia had to admit that a certain level of jealousy towards Maria was starting to rise up, having him be so incredibly worried about her.

They had also just spoken to Maria's father. It took him forever to answer his phone and he didn't seem to care much that his daughter was in the hospital. Patricia couldn't imagine her own father acting so cold and uncaring. If she had been put in here, he would have been there before and ambulance had arrived. She had always thought that that kind of dedication towards a daughter was just...how it was for everyone, well everyone who HAD a dad.

It was a couple of hours before they got any news. Sever brain damage, *Like she Needed any more issues with her head*, and her arm was gonna be practically useless for about a month, but she should be fine. At that moment the biggest question was when, or if, she would wake up. Apparently once she regained consciousness then they could all breathe easy, until then, be ready for anything.

The group had been allowed in to see her, but Patricia didn't really want to go. Hospitals made her feel uneasy, like she was gonna catch one of the nasty diseases being treated here if she hung around, so she used her own family as an excuse to leave the rest of them and go home.

The next two weeks had been hard on Patricia. Always looking behind her, scared to even take a shower alone. She often would have her mom sit with her in the bathroom, just talking about nonsense things while she got cleaned. Her mom complied, of course, but her father did wonder why she was so paranoid about it. She couldn't tell him it was because of an evil teleporting clown.

And yes, she did think it was evil. Anything that would attack human children and laugh was evil, no doubt about it. Maria was definitely off her knocker if she thought it was something natural. Humans don't have natural predators, their HUMAN! Top of the food chain, smartest things on this damn planet! It's fact!

Evil or not, however, the clown did not show itself to Patricia again during those two weeks. No clown, no dead Patrick, nothing to make her afraid save for her own paranoia. Everytime she looked at the TV screen and saw another missing person, though, she knew it was still out there, still hunting. David had mentioned on more than one occasion that he wanted to hunt IT down and kill it.

"If we don't it's gonna keep killing. And if I was right, It will come back in twenty seven years to try and kill OUR kids."

He made a good point, but at the same time he sounded even more crazy than Maria. There was no way in HELL they could take that thing on. It was a shape changer, it was super strong and it knew about them! What did they know about It? NOTHING! NOTHING AT ALL!

But he was making plans anyway. Coming up with ideas and possible locations to try and corner it, so on and so forth. She wanted to stay away from it, but he kept bringing it to her, and she wasn't going to turn HIM away any time soon.

And so for the next two weeks she would "plan" with David, visit Maria and was doing a LOT of extra shopping. Every news show was turned off or ignored, and she didn't even look at the paper anymore. It was a quiet, disturbing, and very unfortunate two weeks for the Flagstaff Princess.

Mateo

Britney would never be the same after that clown. Mateo knew this just looking at his poor girlfriend. He had done his best to try and calm her down and cheer her up over the last two weeks but it had pretty much been in vain. The girl was permanently traumatised. Even when they were together, she was always distracted by her surroundings, looking out for any sign of that silver suit or red hair. Despite his efforts, he didn't feel like he was able to make her safe, or even feel safe, like he used to, and he didn't blame her one bit.

He was terrified. He would never admit it out loud but when Maria had been fighting that clown, his first thought was to take Brit and run while It was distracted. He would have left Maria in a heartbeat

to save himself and his girl. He was strong, sure, but he didn't know jack shit about fighting! His goal is survival nothing more nothing less.

But those thoughts made him feel like he was a horrible human being. He knew he was a coward when it came down to it, and he was ashamed of that. David was stronger and braver than he was, with his attempts at planning an attack against It, and Charlie was super smart, despite his sometimes shitty vocab. Mateo was just a normal guy with normal dreams and a normal plan. He had just wanted to go to business school, get a good job, buy a house, get married have a few kids....normal shit. He never could have expected to have been drafted into the war against fucking Evil clowns!

The last two weeks had been a new kind of tricky. Between taking care of Brit and home life, he had also been looking for a job. Unfortunately the job market in FFlagstaff wasn't the best, but he was able to get a few offers from small fast food joints, like Burger King. It wasn't a lot, and the work was a pain in the ass, but it was enough to give himself a little bit of independence from his mom.

Mateo found himself losing more and more sleep over the two weeks. Not because of fear or bad dreams, it was all just the stress of it all. Worrying about Brit, and Maria, paranoia about the clown, work, David and Patricia planning shit, Charlie....well Charlie was just Charlie and that alone could be stressful at times.

Still he managed to keep on going, working through his stress with physical activity rather than trying to think on it. If he thought about it too much, he would have a panic attack. For now he would have to live in the now, going one day at a time until something more solid is in front of him. So for now his simple goal was to stay alive and help Brit do the same as best as he could.

Britney

The happy go lucky girl that had been Britney Asters had vanished from the world it seemed. She was quiet and depressed, constantly shaking and looking over her shoulder as she made her way through the last two weeks. She never left the house alone, usually being picked up by Mateo, who was doing his best. She was very much

aware of the trouble she was causing him, and she wanted to help, but she just couldn't shake the lingering fear in her spine. She had almost died twice, and had seen two of her friends almost die as well, you don't just recover from something like that.

After the TV incident there was no way she could think of that thing as anything but evil, despite what Maria had said. It enjoyed the hunt too much to just be a natural predator, it was smart. Like a human, but the thing is humans could be terrible things! Rapists and murderers running around, they were evil too. Either Evil by choice or by some sickness to the head, it didn't matter, it was all evil.

Brit had probably been to see Maria the most next to David, often sitting with her while she took a nap, or distracting her with silly word games, but in the end it was clear that the one being distracted was Brit, not Maria.

Considering she had almost died, Maria was handling the situation all too well. She was as calm and collected as ever, talking through things so rationally it almost pissed her off. Maria had no anger or fear towards that thing, none. As a matter of fact whenever David had mentioned trying to go after it, Maria had changed the subject, and not because she was uncomfortable! It was like she wanted to change his mind so as not to upset IT.

Britney had always had a hard time fully understanding Maria, but she seemed more alien than ever to her now. She had to wonder if she had taken some permanent brain damage from the knock on her head. It was possible, she had heard stories about people's personalities being messed up because of head trauma. The brain was an amazingly delicate thing.

Still, the fact that she was almost out of the hospital had cheered Britney up immensely. She HAD to throw Maria a party, no matter what. If nothing else to thank her for saving her, twice! So she started planning, getting permission from Maria's father to use their house, so Maria could get plenty of rest at home, even while celebrating. She got the whole apartment cleaned, with some help from the others, and had spent a great deal of time getting decorations and food and music, trying to make sure they were all things Maria would like.

Planning this party was the most normal Brit had felt in what seemed like forever. She was able to laugh and smile and joke with Mateo again, which seemed to make him happy as well. And most importantly, she was able to forget about that Clown for at least a few hours a day.

Charlie

Guilt was a pretty hard emotion to shake for Charlie. He had known Maria ever since they were little, and she had been afraid of the dark. She was his best friend, his sister practically. She had always been there to protect him from the bullies and his older brother, always able to just run up and scare them off. She had always had his back, and what did he do.

He was willing to let her die in that one moment, and that would come to haunt him for the rest of his life.

For the last two weeks he had been trying to think of some way to make it up to her, some way to keep her safe. But he couldn't think of anything aside from having someone at her side at all times, and there was no way she would allow that. So he took matters into his own hands by making himself for capable of protecting himself and others. He started doing research into laws and steps to getting a license to carry a firearm.

Maria already knew how to shoot, and she was a good shot. She had taken him hunting once before and the sight of the deer she had killed had nearly made him start weeping like a baby. He wasn't a vegetarian or anything, and he knew she was ethical about her kills, but seeing it had been a shock to him that time. Now, he felt like he could kill an animal, or even a human, if it meant protecting his friend.

It would take a while, Maria would probably be home by the time he even gets halfway through the process, but he did start it, thinking that it would help to keep them safe if at least one of them was armed.

While he wasn't studying for that he lent the occasional hand to David and Patricia, agreeing that It needed to be dealt with.

Permanently. He was good at finding obscure information, so he would do research into the town and how many places it could be hiding. The three of them together had been able to work out that the sewers were probably it's main source of transportation through the city. If nothing else, most of the disappearances happened in places where the sewer could be easily accessed. Near drainage pipes, manhole covers, so on and so forth. Not to mention the fact that it climbed out of a fucking toilet to attack Britney!

So, he tried to find maps of Flagstaff's Sewer system, and man was that allot harder than he had been expecting it to be. The town was old enough to have a few different systems laid ontop of eachother, rather than replaced over time. So finding accurate maps of the system was damn near impossible. He had to go to government sights and libraries, even the college didn't have much on it. In the end he only got a vague idea of how the current system was laid out through the city, and he knew that wouldn't be much help besides finding a way in. Once inside there, they would be walking blindly in the dark.

While not researching the shit pipes, Charlie did try to spend time with Maria. She was tired and quiet but she didn't seem to hold any resentment towards Charlie for his actions. He had apologised so many times to her, that he felt she might even be getting tired of it. Still, they were able to talk and have their usual banter, making him feel amazing any time he even got a chuckle out of her, but he knew she was distracted by something,

He had noticed how she would frequently look at the balloon that had been tied to her bed, how her fingers would slide along the string absently. She would always have that look in her eye too. That look that meant she was thinking long and hard about some curious thing that had grabbed her attention. She did have a bad habit of obsessing over things that were strange or new to her. Like she couldn't let it go until she had a full understanding of it.

Charlie wandered, and worried, about what she was obsessing on now. He suspected it to be the Clown, but he didn't want to assume. It was certainly one of those things that would catch her attention, but the idea of her being so curious about it to forsake her Logic made him worried. Would she try to talk to it, reason with it? What if it came here at night when everyone had left? What would happen?

He didn't want to consider those things, but the thoughts often popped into his head against her will. Every day he had come to see her, terrified that he would walk into the room to see a bloody mess of sheets and flesh where she had been torn asunder. But those fears were never realised. He would just walk in and find her reading or watching TV, maybe talking to one of the others who had come to see her. He once walked in on her when she was preparing for a bath, oops, and had to make even more blustered apologies.

He felt lucky, in a way, having no interest in her romantically. Most people would, and have, assumed that they were a thing, or would become one due to their close relationship, but Charlie had never thought of her in that way. She was pretty, yeah, but waaaaay to weird for his taste. She was his big sister, and that about summed it up. If he suddenly started feeling attracted to her he would probably think he had gone mildly insane.

David, however, had started to worry him. David was visiting Maria three or four times a day, sometimes at night to check on her. He had known the guy had a thing for her but it was getting to the point of stalking. Everytime he had seen David walk into that hospital room the guy had questioned everything new in the room that he himself hadn't brought her, and that one balloon seemed to drive him up the wall.

Charlie liked David being around her less and less, and tried to make a habit of finding an excuse for David not to go, but he could hardly stop him. And so far it seemed fairly harmless, if nothing else David was concerned about her safety as much as he was himself. So, for now, he was just mildly disturbed by it, but not scared.

When Britney brought up that she was planning a party for Maria he had to jump in on that. He knew her better than anyone so, for once, the girl actually took his advice on things like food and decorations. Purples and Greys, with allot of home-cooked comfort food like fried chicken and apple pie. Maria was a pretty simple person in terms of likes and dislikes, and for the most part, everyone at least enjoyed the same stuff.

The night before being released from the hospital Charlie had gone with the others to see her in her room. Britney had brought her some

clothes, the choice of which made Charlie nearly suffocate due to laughter, and the rest of them had brought their own cars so that they could take her shit home for her. She had been brought a lot of random crap during her stay, the sheer amount of flowers was enough to open their own shop. And he couldn't remember a time in her life when she ever owned this many stuffed animals. Someone had gone a bit overboard with the gifts, David.

Maria was extremely distracted that night. She clearly had something on her mind that was making her mildly uncomfortable. He wanted to ask her about it, but he knew better. Her internal battles were always kept internal, it was just how she was. So, he left her with a firm hug and a "See ya tomorrow." He left that hospital with a bad feeling, like he was leaving something precious behind.

13. Chapter 13

Authors note; From this point on the story is mostly going to be seen from Maria's point of view. I would say we have almost reached the half-way point of this tale. Thank you so much for all of your support, messages, reviews and so on, it has really helped me to keep this steam-train of a story going. I hope you all enjoy this chapter and I hope so see some more lovely messages! Thank you and enjoy!

Pre-Celebration

It was the last week of May when Maria was released from Flagstaff Hospital, the sun warm despite the heavy rains, summer now in full bloom. Maria woke up that morning due to a pestering strip of sunlight shining in through her window, stripping across the room and right into her face. She blinked at the glare, squeezing her eyes shut with a deep groan and turning over in her little bed to face the other direction. Noticing how the best felt more spacious than it had when she fell asleep her eyes blinked open and she sat up, looking around the quiet room.

Pennywise was gone. She had figured he would be, he was never around when she woke up in the morning, but if felt different today. *What the fuck just happened?* He words from last night rang in her memory. She was still waiting on the answer to the question. Those were the last words either one of them had spoken last night and it left an interesting environment to the situation.

Typically Maria's answer would have bee, *We made love*, but that didn't right quite true. It wasn't love making that occurred last night, nothing as sweet and misunderstood. Last night, what ever it was, had been much more straightforward than "making love." It had been a savage physical need that was being relieved. No promises of forever or proclamations of love or loyalty, only pure, unadulterated lust.

Maria shifted in bed, remembering the savage violent way he had her last night and was expecting to be feeling the after effects of it in her

hips and legs. But as she shifted, stretched and stood up, there was no soreness or stiffness, she felt as good as new. She couldn't help but smile. For someone who she didn't think did that sort of thing often, he was pretty damn good at it. She made her way into the small bathroom again, alone this time, and turned on the hot water, very much aware that he shower the other night had not resulted in much washing.

As the water heated up and started to steam up the little room, Maria reached behind her with one hand and pulled at the small sting at the base of her neck to let the hospital gown fall as she looked at herself in the mirror. No new bruises on her skin, no scratches or marks of any kind that she didn't have when she first entered the hospital. The smile on her face grew slightly as she thought about that. It HAD been savage, last night, he had mounted her with barely any warning and practically no foreplay what so ever, and yet SHE still felt beyond satisfied and was completely unhurt. She could still remember her first time. She was a little young for it, but that's not too surprising any more, and the guy it was with had apparently done it before too. Man did she feel like shit afterwards. Clumsy hands attempting foreplay, deciding to go with everything he had seen on PornHub rather than being normal. Ordering her around, now THAT had really pissed her off. She had come out of that feeling like shit. She had torn, had bruises on her thighs and hips, and had hickies in places she couldn't really hide them. Needless to say that last night had been a major improvement.

And the Irony did not escape her, either. That "Thing" as her friends referred to him as, that "Monster" who kills and eats people and their fears, was a more caring and humane lover than any human she had ever had the displeasure of sleeping with.

She chuckled to herself and shook her head, her long hair still slightly damp from the previous night, brushing against her back. She stepped away from the mirror and into the shower, enjoying the heat of it. The downside to last night, everything seemed so cold to her now. *His natural body heat has to hover around one ten, if not higher,* She thought as she started to lather the hospital shampoo into her hair. *Internally might even be as high as one twenty. It didn't actually burn me so it's less than one forty, at least.*

She leaned back against the wall of the shower, closing her eyes as she thought about that incredible heat. She wandered if he had passed through the Valley on his way here from Derry Main, it must have been hell if he had. She couldn't imagine anyone with such a high body temperature surviving in that kind of heat. She remembered the feeling of his hands when he had touched her, how clear it had been that he had been trying to learn about her before his urge became too much for him to hold back. That single glove he had taken off, his skin felt so human, but not. Almost like synthetic skin used on prosthetics. It had been soft, but dry, and unused to touching a woman in such a manner.

She felt that heat growing again as she remembered the feeling, the sensations of giving in to her own curiosity and lust. It was past the point of debate, by now. Whether it was a good idea or a bad idea in the long run, it was too late to turn back from it, she would just have to live with the results. And those results, at least right then, were telling her that she wanted it again, she wanted Him again.

She gave a mildly irritated groan as she let her good hand slide between her legs, pressing her hurt arm against her chest as she started to touch herself in ways she had neglected for most of her teenage years. She bit her lip and closed her eyes, trying to remember the sensation so that she could finish this quickly, before a nurse got there to check on her. She could remember, it was currently the most vivid and detailed memory she at in that moment, but her hand simply couldn't reproduce the feeling. She felt irritated and frustrated as she let her hand drop, a deep growl escaping her throat as she gave up on it. Her frustration was so strong that, for a moment, she wanted to slap the familiar giggle on the other side of the curtain.

She pulled the curtain aside and looked up into those golden eyes and the very amused smile on those bright red lips. She glared at him and crossed her arms, a frown playing on her brow slightly as she took one step forward.

"Don't you dare laugh." She said. "YOU did this to me."

He didn't laugh, but his smile did grow into an obnoxious grin. She REALLY wanted to slap him just then, and probably would have had he not stepped up to her, one hand casually slipping between her legs

to make her gasp slightly.

"You, are the one who gave consent, Mari Mari." He said, saying the last bit quickly with a little crack to his voice. He was certainly in a playful mood, with his new nickname and all.

She growled at him slightly and put her hands on his arms as he started to push her back, rubbing her as he did so causing her to breathe heavily. She found herself, once again, between Pennywise and the shower wall, but it seemed different. He still had lust and want in those golden eyes, but they weren't that savage, beastly urge. His eyes were smart and calculating as he slipped his fingers inside her, drawing a moan from Maria.

"Fuck that's good..." She muttered, clasping onto him as he massaged her. His smile was unwavering as he leaned in and gave her a small kiss on the cheek. She took deep breaths and reached for him, but he pulled her hand away and shook his head.

"We don't have time for the whole thing." He said, sounding fairly disappointed. "So I'm just gonna help you, for now. Sound good?" His voice was so soft and pleasant in that moment, but not...hypnotic. She looked at him and gave him a grateful smile. He had come out just to help her before someone found her in a sexually frustrated state. How...sweet? She wasn't too sure. Still she nodded, giving him a kiss on his cheek and leaning against the wall again to simply enjoy this.

Watching him slide onto his knees still shocked the living hell out of her. He grabbed one of her legs and hooked it up over his shoulder as he removed his fingers. *He's not gonna....is he?* She thought to herself and...yea. He did.

The VERY new sensation of having someone's lips and tongue THERE sent a violent shudder through Maria's spine, causing her to let out a strangled, sighing moan as she clutched on to the handicap rail. His tongue was hot and very skilled as he worked to please her, his eyes half closed as he concentrated. For the briefest of seconds Maria remembered how he sometimes had thousands of razor sharp teeth in that mouth, but she did not care one bit. If THAT was how he chose to kill her in the end, she was strangely okay with that.

She was starting to relax into the sensation, her body getting used to the strange event of receiving Oral, when something happened to cause an embarrassingly girly squeal of shock, pleasure and, "what the fuck". *Did his tongue just STRETCH!?* She looked down at him with wide eyes and he smiled back at her, eyes glowing brightly as it moved inside her, confirming that, yes, it had.

Maria suddenly had a very real realisation as to the popularity of some Japanese porn crazes. SHIT this was feeling really good. She was biting back loud, undignified moans and gasps as he worked around her most sensitive spots, he own mind helping the process by thinking of all the benefits to having sex with someone who can change their physical form. Talk about kinky shit.

Her orgasm hit like an explosion, just above the spot where the tip of his tongue had been teasing her. She actually blacked out for a moment, her hips bucking against the source of their pleasure. It was short, but intense as she regained her sense of self and her knees started to buckle. If Pennywise hadn't slid his hands up to her lower back, she would have fallen on him.

He pulled away from her and helped her slide down onto the floor of the shower, where he leaned in and gave her a kiss. Despite the usual implication of it, she still didn't sense any romance in the action, it was more of a whim than anything. She looked at him, breathing hard as he sat there smiling at her, calm as ever. It took her a few minutes before she could speak.

"Thanks for that." She said, her legs still shaking slightly. He smiled at her hand pushed a few strands of wet hair away from her face. How she had avoided getting soap in her eyes during that entire time was beyond her. She took the time to catch her breath and stand back up, Pennywise standing with her.

"You okay?" He asked her, putting one hand on her arm to steady her as she wobbled. She nodded and looked up at him, a thought playing in her mind. So, of course, she had to speak it.

"What...is happening?" She asked. She watched as his face fell slightly, not upset, but comprehensive as he looked away to think. "I mean...I'm not complaining or anything but...it's really fucking

confusing." She explained.

"Tell me about it." Pennywise said, leaning against the wall beside her, the water seeming not to be effecting him whatsoever. "I've never done these sort of things before. Especially not with a human."

"So why then?" She asked, starting to rinse the rest of the soap out of her hair. "I mean...was it just hundreds of years of sexual neglect getting to ya?" He chuckled and shook his head, his chin buried in the ruffles he had around his neck.

"I don't know why." He stated, voice deep and sincere. "Because...I want to, I suppose is the only real explanation I can give. You confused the hell out of me at first, you still do, I'm not sure when I started to want you in any way other than food...." Maria had to smile at that and she placed a hand on his shoulder, a smile on her own lips.

"Well...if it's any comfort you're still along the same lines, considering we humans do call what you just did 'eating someone out'." The laugh she got in response to that was so light and kind of silly that it just made her day. She shook her head and turned off the water, grabbing a towel, and starting to dry herself off. "Whatever it is.....I don't mind it." She said with a sideways glance at Pennywise who was smiling.

"Neither do I." He said, pushing off from the shower wall. "So...if it's okay with you I would like to keep it up, for now anyway." She was mildly taken aback by the question but it didn't take a moment's thought to agree to it.

So the two of them chatted about this new "arrangement" they had agreed on, talking about it while Maria angrily put on the DRESS Britney had brought for her. It was a simple summer dress that went down to just below her knees, the spaghetti straps on top feeling like razor wire against her skin. She would get her for this.

Either way, the arrangement they had agreed on ended up going something akin to this; First off, neither one of them had any illusions of romance, dating, or love. It was a mutual curiosity and sexual desire. Both of them had the right to refuse sex whenever they

wanted, no obligation being held. Pennywise, being what he was, had to get express permission before doing any more weird things, Maria did not want any more surprises like the tongue. It was nice, but some warning would have made it better. And lastly, they keep the darker business out of it. She does not ask about his meals, and he keeps her friends off the menu.

There was still one thing hanging over their heads in that regard though; David. Both of them were very much aware that he was planning to try and kill Pennywise, and Pennywise was very much aware of how intense the boy's feelings were for Maria, though he never mentioned that part to her.

"I'm gonna try to convince them to forget their plans." Maria said as she sat, cross legged, on her bed. "I'm hoping to scare them into stopping it. But, I don't know, they can be stubborn sometimes. And if I can't convince them to stop...." She looked away from Pennywise, who just nodded. They both knew she would go with them to kill him. She had been their friend much longer than she had been in....THIS with Pennywise, and she couldn't just let them wander down into the sewers to die. And they would die.

"Do what you need to do when the time comes to it." Pennywise said, looking straight at her. "In the end we all follow our natures. Yours is to protect those weaker than yourself, mine is to devour and survive."

They both nodded and sat in silence for a moment, heads bowed slightly as they worried about what would happen in the near future. It wasn't until Pennywise's head snapped up and looked at the closed door did either of them speak again.

"Your friends are here to pick you up." He said, standing from his seat and looking at her. "I need to go...but I'll see you at your party, I suspect." He gave a small smile. "Though I'll stay hidden until your...friends leave."

"Okay." Maria smiled and gave him a tight hug, and a kiss on the cheek, He smiled at her and stepped away, vanishing into the darkest corner of the room.

14. Chapter 14

Author's note; thank you so much for your patience with this chapter, it's been a pretty hectic couple of days. I hope you all enjoy it.

The Celebration

It was only a few moments after Pennywise left the room that her friends came in through the door. She nearly threw the empty bedpan at Charlie when he started to snicker at her dress. It was a nice dress, she supposed, but it REALLY wasn't her thing. The skirt came to just above her knees and was a golden reddish color, kinda like rust. The neckline was low enough that, combined with the shorter skirt, made her feel very shy. It wasn't self conscious, exactly, just discomfort.

Still Maria got the rest of her things gathered, including the red balloon that had made its home in one corner, and made her way out of the Hospital. On stepping out of the double-electric doors, Maria turned her face to the gray and cloudy sky, taking a deep breath of the humid air. The pavement was still damp from the previous rain, and it looked like there would be even more within the next hour.

"Can't we get at least one sunny day this summer?" Patricia asked, frowning at the clouds. "I mean, isn't the whole point of summer Sunlight?" Maria chuckled and shook her head, taking a brief glance around the parking lot. Charlie put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed it, causing her to look up at him.

"You okay?" He asked softly. She frowned at him for a second before nodding slowly, not quite sure what he meant by that. He nodded and gave her a small nervous smile before looking around the lot himself. *Oh. He thinks I'm worried about Pennywise....* She realised and shook her head. She couldn't really blame him, but a part of her still got upset about how her friends were trying to plan and assassinate her.....what?

She would have to think about that later, but right now the wind was starting to pick up and she was having to hold the stupid skirt down, so the group hurried over to their cars, where Maria got into the

passenger seat beside Charlie, with David in the back as Mateo drove the other two girls and they started to make their way back to Maria's apartment.

"It's....clean...." Were Maria's first words on entering her apartment. And it was. All of the beer cans and empty chip bags were gone, the floors had been vacuumed and mopped, it even looked like someone had dusted things. For a moment she had thought she had entered the wrong house, but when she saw her father coming out of the hallway, still looking half asleep, she knew it was home.

"Hey Dad...." Maria said, as the man walked up to her. He gave her a tired, bored smile and put a hand on her shoulder.

"Welcome home sweetie." He said before grabbing his keys and walking out the door. Maria nodded and chewed on her bottom lip, the pain helping to keep tears from welling up. Despite everything she could say or think about how she preferred to be independent, there would always be a small part of her hoping that he would actually give a shit.

Her friends were staring at her, but she just shrugged and moved towards the hallway.

"Well I know you guys got something planned for me." Maria said with an arched eyebrow. "But before any kind of party I'm gonna go change clothes. I will get you for this, Brit." The group chuckled and shook their heads as Maria turned around and made her way quickly to her bedroom.

Maria was relieved to see that no one had touched her room in their cleaning efforts. The only thing that was different was that most of her hospital "gifts" had been placed in there. She decided she would have to sort through them eventually, but right then she let the balloon float up to her ceiling and turned to her closet.

Jeans, and a loose tank top that had a picture of a tiger wearing glasses. That was all she really she put the dress in the back of her closet, with the one that still had a tag, and made her way back to her friends who already had music playing and were busting out soda pop. She walked into the room and plopped down on the sofa in

between Brit and Patricia. Charlie handed her a can of good ol Dr. Pibs and stood up in front of the group, holding his own grape soda high.

"To Maria! The most stupid, reckless, insanely brave person in this fucking city!" He said with a big, freckled grin. Maria rolled her eyes, feeling the faintest tinge of embarrassment on her face. The others all raised their drinks and cheered her name before they proceeded to down their drinks.

Then the party started. Maria had never actually experienced a party before, she realised during this strange event. The group was dancing, playing games, chatting, it was just an overall good time. Maria didn't participate in allot of it, using the "I'm a little tired" excuse to get out of dancing with Charlie and David, who were currently "Busting a move" as they called it. Maria just observed it, as David looked like something that was planned but not very well, and Charlie was just a mass of flailing limbs. Brit and Patricia had started to do each other's hair on one end of the sofa, having been thoroughly forbidden from touching Marias. So Maria just spent the majority of her time playing a racing game with Mateo on the PS3 he had brought with him.

"Maria, you need to have more fun!" Charlie called out over the loud music. *The neighbors are going to complain.*

"I am having fun!" She called back, despite Mateo winning AGAIN. "How about I take you lot hunting and camping in a few weeks, and show you MY normal type of fun!"

"Camping?" Patricia asked, turning to look at Maria while Brit put some beads in her newest braid. "Like outside where there are bugs and stuff?" Charlie laughed and sat on the arm of the sofa behind Brit so he could look at Patricia.

"Take it from someone who has been camping with Maria before." He said with a goofy grin. "It's not bugs you have to worry about, it seeing her hunt and bleed a buck. I'll never get that image out of my head..."

Patricia looked like she was about to vomit just from hearing about it

but Maria just shook her head at them. It was necessary to be able to eat the meat, it's not that gross. But she supposed she could give a break to the city girl who had never even seen a chicken get butchered.

"Maybe no hunting then, but camping." Maria suggested, leaning back in the sofa. "There are ways to protect against bugs and what not. It could be fun!"

The group all looked a little hesitant, Brit looking at Mateo nervously. Maria frowned a little and looked around at them. This was more than just a little hesitant, they had all gone silent looking back and forth at each other. Maria turned her attention to David and raised a questioning eyebrow at him. David sighed and sat next to Maria, a bit too close for her comfort.

"Out there....we would be defenseless." He stated and the rest of them nodded solemnly. David took a deep breath and put his hand on hers. His hand was cold and kind of clammy, it was very unpleasant. "Look, I didn't want to do this during your celebration, none of us did. But if we want any chance of being able to do things like, go camping or having fun, we need to deal with that clown."

And there it was. The subject everyone had been dreading bringing up. Charlie shook his head and turned off the music so that there was silence in the house. Maria pulled her hand away from David and stood up, folding her arms and looking away from the group.

"Maria....we've been planning..." Patricia said, fiddling with the hem of her skirt. "We figured it must be hanging out in the sewers. If we can just find out where then....maybe we can get the police down there or something...."

Maria had to shake her head and close her eyes, covering her face with one of her hands as she tried to think. Her friends were going to get themselves and other people killed, and she would not hold it against Pennywise for doing it. She needed to think of some way to get them to forget their plans and their fear. She stayed like that for a while, ignoring the murmurs behind her as a headache started to creep into her temples. It wasn't until she felt intense heat in front of her that she looked up into golden eyes. Pennywise was there,

standing right in front of her, a serious look on his face.

She had expected to start hearing screams behind her, but there were none. She suspected that only she could see him right then. He was being silent, his hands at his side as he looked at her, waiting for her to do something. She swallowed and tried to think, when a very simple, if desperate thought came into her head. She turned back to the group and took a deep breath.

"Guys...." She said, managing to quiet the others. "I.....He....I saw the clown when I was in the hospital." She said, and there was complete silence. Patricia had gone white, Brit covered her mouth, David looked furious, but she continued. " I thought It was gonna kill me but it didn't It talked to me. Offered a deal."

"What kind of deal?" David asked, his normally kind voice coming out as something more akin to an angry snarl. The others were watching her intensely.

"A truce, in a way." She said. "So long as we leave it alone, and continue with our summer normally, It will leave us alone. Like a bee wearing grease makeup."

The group stared at her for a moment and Brit was the first to nod, obviously still shaken from her very, VERY, close encounter with Pennywise. But David shook his head.

"No deal." He said, causing the others to gape at him. "If we do nothing, other people are gonna die. And what about when it wakes back up in twenty seven years? It's gonna eat our kids, and their friends. We can't just let it go."

Maria sighed and shook her head, feeling her vain hope deflate a little. She didn't think she could change HIS mind, but perhaps the others will save themselves a little bit. They all looked conflicted about whether they should let David go after Pennywise alone or not. Thank god for Mateo.

"Lets all think on it and talk about it." He said. "If nothing else, maybe we have more time than we thought. And don't forget, Maria is still recovering. The last thing we want to do is go pissing that thing off

when she's not at one hundred percent."

A point that everyone, even David, was able to agree on. So, they all agreed to drop the subject for now in order to try and enjoy the rest of the day. It didn't work too well. Despite the games, food, drinks, and happy pop music, there was now a heavy cloud hanging over the group. Maria would find herself looking off into the far corner of her kitchen, where Pennywise was standing, just watching what was going on.

After losing to Mateo for the Nth time, Maria stood up and started to make her way to the bathroom. She gave Pennywise a quick glance and he nodded before following her. Once inside she closed and locked the door to give them both a hint of privacy. She turned to the clown and he put his hands on her shoulders.

"Maria...if they come after me..." He said and she nodded. He would kill them, he wouldn't even hesitate. Hell he would probably laugh as he did it. She sighed and ran her fingers through her hair, feeling horribly tired.

"I....would have to help them..." She said. And he nodded in return. They both knew what would happen. They would fight each other again, and the next time people were going to die. Maria let out a frustrated growl and leaned her head forward onto his chest. He patted her hair gently and sighed himself, Maria could hear that deep, otherworldly grumble in his chest.

"You got them stalled, if nothing else." He said. "Perhaps enough that I will already be asleep if, or when, they decide to come after me. So, for right now, we can enjoy each other as we please and not worry about it too intensely."

She let out a small smile and played with the frill collar of his suit, eyeing a small speck of red that had been left there. Knowing that there would be a new name on the news that night she reached up and gave him a gentle kiss, feeling his hands make their way over her hips.

"Will you be by tonight?" She asked, feeling heat grow in her stomach as she asked that. He smiled and nodded, pulling her flush against his

body. If it wasn't for the group of people out in her living room she would have given into her urges right then and there, but she didn't. So the two of them pulled away from each other and Maria left the restroom, knowing that Pennywise wasn't going to leave her side for the rest of the night.

The celebration lasted until about four in the afternoon, the last couple of hours having been much less fun than the first couple. Maria watched as everyone left her apartment, waving and saying her goodnights and thank yous. Charlie was the last one to be headed out, and he stood at the door with her for a little while, just chatting about random shit. After a bit the conversation trailed off and they were left standing there in silence.

"I'll try and talk David down." Charlie said softly. "I mean....he made a good point but, I don't think we can all be blamed for not wanting to die." Maria nodded.

"I hope you do. I really don't want to fight that clown again." She stated honestly, knowing that those golden eyes were watching her from behind. Charlie walked past the threshold and turned to her again, giving her a hug. She hugged him back and patted his shoulder. Pulling back she felt heat against her back as invisible arms wrapped around her waist and hot lips pressed against the back of her neck. She wanted to laugh at Pennywise's impatience, but Charlie was still right there.

"You get some sleep." He told her, wagging his finger like a mother. "You need to get better soon so we can all stop walking on eggshells."

"When did I ever need you to talk on eggshells?" She asked as a hot hand grasped her breast. She had to swallow a moan pressed a hand against her mouth, closing her eyes.

"Are you okay?" Charlie asked and she nodded, taking a breath.

"Y...yeah, I'm just tired. I do think I'll go to bed." She said with a smile and he nodded.

"All right. Well, I'll talk to you tomorrow." He said and turned, giving a jaunty wave as he walked down the breezeway. Maria waved back

before stepping back and closing the door. As soon as the door clicked shut the hand that was simply touching her shoved up under her shirt and she felt something hard pressing against the back of her jeans. She leaned forward on the door and looked over her shoulder with an annoyed look.

"Jerk. You could have waited five more minutes." She said, her voice coming out much less harsh than she had intended, considering it was said through a faint moan. Pennywise gave an amused chuckle and leaned off of her so that she could turn and face him. She leaned her back on the door as his hands slid down her waist and hips, pulling them forward against his own.

"I've been waiting since this morning." He said, a light growl in his throat. She rolled her eyes and pulled him into a kiss.

"Fine then." She said, starting to walk pass him and taking his hand to pull him along. "And I guess as a thank you for that I'll let you do what you want. Just don't go too crazy." She said as they walked into the hallway towards her room. He chuckled again and grasped her hand, taking a few long strides forward so that he was pressed against her back again as they walked.

"I'll try." He said and she laughed, opening the door to her room. They both stepped inside and Pennywise closed the door. She turned to look at him again and saw those eyes glowing brightly, the look on his face very reminiscent of their first time. She knew she was gonna be sore after this.

There was a brief moment of stillness before he moved to take her. His hands almost ripped off her clothes, pulling the tank top off over her head as he pushed her onto the bed. The air actually left her lungs with a *oof* as she hit the mattress, him already climbing on top of her and starting to unbutton her jeans. She lifted her hips so that he could pull them off as she started to use her hands to try and find some means of removing his own clothes.

She was completely nude before she realised there were no buttons or zippers on on his suit and she grunted in frustration. He chuckled at her and simply pulled the top off like a T-shirt. Maria was very much aware that the design of his clothes should not allow that, but

remembering that it was probably an image he created anyway, she decided to simply accept the warped reality.

She watched as he continued to take off his clothes, observing the body he had allowed himself to have. Without the suit he looked a little more normal, at least in terms of proportions. His skin was all white, like his face, and he had a slim-toned chest. She wondered how it changed when he morphed, how much of this current image was created and imagined right then and there as she slid her hands up his torso.

He smiled at her and leaned down, kissing her hard on the lips. Her mouth opened for him as his tongue slipped inside and this time she outright felt it change in her mouth. She moaned and gasped slightly as it reached almost to the back of her throat, making it hard to breathe. She choked a little and Pennywise drew back slightly, letting it flick and swirl around the inside of her mouth. Once he had finally pulled away completely she gasped for some air, watching as the forked-tongue flicked playfully. He pushed her legs open and leaned over her, thrusting into her with force. She gasped out and grasped at her pillows as a very long night started in earnest.

Maria did not actually fall asleep till nearly midnight, all of those hours being filled with nothing but hot, rough, primal sex. She had never orgasmed so much before, and it left her exhausted, even though he went several more times than she did. She had given him permission to do whatever he wanted, and he did, changing his body to give her new sensations and to hit all of her good spots at once. At one point she remembered being overwhelmed by the fact that he had been double penetrating her BY HIMSELF.

She was on her hands and knees, with him simply pumping into her, hard, when she finally lost all energy to keep going. One final orgasm met with his seed caused her to crumple onto the bed, breathing hard and sweating buckets. It had been like making love in a sauna. She was hazy as Pennywise laid down with her and pulled the covers up to make sure she didn't get chilled. He petted her hair and kissed her gently as she slipped into a blissful unconscious.

15. Chapter 15

Author's note; Sorry about how long it took to get this chapter up, I've been a bit under the weather lately. I hope you all enjoy it and leave your wonderful reviews! Thank you for your patience!

Five Months

Despite never having officially agreed to it, an unspoken truce was made that summer. Pennywise the Dancing Clown, for the most part, stayed away from the group of friends, and they made no official move against him. Despite this, the summer was filled with a tension no one could have possibly predicted. The disappearances started to spread out more, now only a few people being taken each week, instead of every other day. Despite the break in the rain, the weather started to cool off very quickly, to the point of people needing to wear light jackets in early September, just to block out the wind.

The group of friends all worked, in their own way, to continue on with their lives. Maria, Britney, Mateo, David, and Charlie all attended college, starting in late August, and that alone soon took up a great deal of their time. Britney and Maria managed to become roommates, down the hall from Charlie and Mateo. David was put into a different dorm house all together, which seemed to have made him very disappointed.

Patricia had gotten herself a part-time job, to keep herself busy while she waited to hear back from the various schools she had applied to for the next year, planning on going out of state for school made it much harder for her to actually get there. Still, she kept herself busy, going to the campus and hanging out with her new, close group of friends as often as she could.

David had probably had the hardest time out of all of them. After their talk, he still insisted on attempting to take it out, but at that point he was the only one who was actively attempting to plan anything. Eventually, once he realised that he would not be getting any more assistance from the others, he stopped bringing it up to them. The change that came over him was not subtle, everyone noticed it as soon as it started in earnest. The first big thing was his

hair. He cut it shorter and bleached out his natural dark color. He already looked so much different just with the light hair, but it didn't help that he stopped with his previous types of training and started swimming more. Over the five months he became less muscled and more sleek, his muscles changing and shaping to the new use. His tan started to go away as he spent the majority of his time indoors, and with the new, almost all white wardrobe, everyone made notes at how he was looking a bit like a ghost of a member of Nsync.

The biggest change aside from his appearance was his personality. He became distant and angry to most of his friends. His new coach had certainly noticed the change and had been pushing him to get some help, or be pushed off the team, but they were empty threats. Despite the changes David was still one of the most talented people to be on a soccer team, long as he was mostly harmless to the team, they wouldn't let him go. Still, Maria obviously did not want to be around him much anymore. He had begun to cling to her, almost obsessively, and it seemed to aggravate her to no end. Britney did not let him into their dorm room anymore, either, not after she caught him rummaging through Maria's stuff.

The obsessive behavior and hostility only got worse when Maria introduced a new boyfriend to the group, much to everyone's surprise. A tall man, maybe in his mid twenties, with raven-black hair and bright blue eyes. She introduced him as Penn, apparently she had met him at a Denny's where he worked. Britney, Patricia, and Mateo all warmed up to Penn very quickly. He was very charismatic and was hilariously funny, even if he wasn't around too often. David, of course, despised Penn, and it was very clear that Penn was not too fond of David either. During times of silence the two would get into glaring matches with each other, and everyone would agree that Penn always won. There was no denying that the young man had some form of extreme violence hidden under that kind, funny demeanor, but for most of them, as long as he didn't act on it, they were okay with him. Charlie, on the other hand, was simply uncomfortable with him. There was just something off about Penn that he could not put a finger on. He was, of course, nice to him, and he even had a lot of fun joking around with the guy, but he was very uncomfortable with this new guy who had apparently broken through Maria's shell.

Penn, of course, was none other than Pennywise. Maria and he had agreed on the facade of a boyfriend just to keep the group from getting too suspicious, especially with Pennywise's frequent visits to Maria's room. The two of them had continued their sexual affairs throughout the summer and into fall. However, once Maria went to college it made it much harder to find the privacy necessary for their escapades. It was tricky and took some planning, but they were able to stay quite active. Pennywise had, of course, continued to feed during this time, but he found himself less hungry, now that he was spending more time in the bed of a woman. Perhaps he had been hungry for such company for much longer than he had thought, and simply used food as a means of attempting to satiate it? He wasn't sure, but the number of killings and disappearances had dropped significantly. Maria had noticed this too, and on one, particularly interesting night, where they had both simply decided to lay together, rather than engage in full carnal pleasures, Maria actually brought up the killings for the first time.

"What does happen to them?" She asked, curiously. He was shocked at the question, but her heart was still calm and steady, her voice the same as she looked at him with those mismatched eyes.

"They float." He stated. It was true, of course, but that was the best way he could describe it. "I feed on their fears and then I send them to float, to feast on their flesh over time."

Maria surprised Pennywise again by laughing, a small, almost sinister giggle in the back of her throat, much like his own when he was enjoying a particularly engaging hunt.

"So what, you're like a squirrel? Gathering all your nuts in one hidey-hole to prepare for the winter?"

Pennywise chuckled at that.

"I never thought of it like that, but yeah, pretty close." He stated with an amused tone, running long, thin fingers through her brown hair. Maria leaned into the touch before turning over and straddling the clown form in front of her. Pennywise gave a small shudder as the smell of sex reached his nostrils, and his hands found their way to her hips and she started to unbutton her shirt.

"You've taken less, lately." She said as she pulled the blouse off of her shoulders, leaving her in her white bra. "Are you finally getting full?"

He smiled at her and sat up slightly, his hands sliding up and down her waist as his tongue gently glided up the area between her breasts. He could feel his own arousal grown at the sight, smell, and the sound of her voice.

"Perhaps." He said as he tugged at the cloth on her chest with his teeth. "Or perhaps I've been satiated in a different way." The giggle they both let out at that matched almost too perfectly, like singers creating harmony. It didn't take long for Maria to shed the rest of her clothing and start rocking her hips against his arousal. He was able to lip into her so easily, and yet it never once felt boring. He, of course, could change his shape to match with hers perfectly, allowing them both to feel the most amount of pleasure possible.

Hearing her moan at his penetration he simply leaned back on his elbows and watched her ride him slowly, her teeth peeking out between pink lips, those eyes bright and slightly hazed with pleasure as he let her control the pace and force. Despite what he would have thought, he preferred night like this, where he was completely in control of his body, allowing them to go slow and gentle, letting the pleasure last hours at a time, rather than when he simply mounted her like an animal in rut. Both felt amazing, of course, and she seemed to enjoy the times when he was a bit more forceful, but this was the best. Both clear in desires and lust, simply working to please themselves and each other. Being able to watch her muscled form rock against his body with such fluid motions, completely of her own free will, knowing this is something she wanted, made it so much more satisfactory.

Maria had been having a blast over the rest of summer. School had started up and already she was doing great with her studies. Obviously it would be a few years before she could move on to an actual medical school, but right now, things were going well. She had been able to go out hunting in early fall, tagging a good sized deer that would give enough meat both to keep and also to sell. The pelt made great lining for a new winter coat and boots, and the antlers sold for a pretty penny. The best part, though, was the fact that she was able to spend about four days out in the woods, just her and

Pennywise. She had not been able to convince any of her friends to go with her, but when she had made the offer to her new lover, he seemed quite thrilled at the prospect. Though he did not participate in the hunting itself, as animals do not feel the same profound fear as humans do, he was kind enough to keep her tent warm, and her warm at night.

As far as she was concerned, things were great. Yeah, people were still vanishing but she would not sin Pennywise for following his nature, and so far he had continued to leave her group of friends alone. After introducing "Penn" to the group she had certainly noticed the hostility between him and David, but that was fine. If he could scare David away from creeping on her she would be eternally grateful. Everything was going so well, good grades, having fun with her friends, amazing sex, and not having to live with her slob of a father, Maria could not remember a time she was this content with life. Still, when October finally came around, things started to falter again. Pennywise had gone to hunt, again, and Maria was spending the night with all of her friends, just having some Pizza in her dorm room while they all chatted and played board games. They had just finished a particularly long game of Monopoly, were Mateo won, and were getting ready to wind down when David spoke up out of nowhere, a serious look in his dark eyes.

"I'm going after It." He said bluntly, silencing the room. The others all looked at him, and Maria out right glared.

"Why?" She asked. "H...It's left us alone all summer. Why poke the bear?" She looked around at the others. They had all gone pale, as memories of what it had done all returned to them. She sighed as she observed them. She wasn't able to understand what they were feeling, and that made her frustrated, so she looked back at David who had a harsh, determined look on his face.

"It's killing have dropped over the last couple of months and I think that means it's getting ready to go back into Hibernation. If that's true we won't get another chance for at least twenty-seven years. That thing kills people, it needs to die." He was speaking loudly and clearly, but the look in his eyes made it almost seem like he was talking to himself. "I found some old maps of the sewers, there's a large chamber deep deep down, used to be a junction for waste and

water to gather during heavy rain, to prevent flooding. That must be where it's at....and I'm gonna go there."

Everyone was so quiet, hearing this. Maria could not believe he had been studying the sewers all this time, trying to find Pennywise. Why did he care so damn much as long as it left him alone? What shocked her more was seeing the others slowly start to nod.

"He's right." Patricia said, wringing her hands together nervously. "He have to take it out while we still got a chance. I don't want it to come back in twenty-odd years and eat my children! We have to kill it...."

The others, despite clearly being terrified, all agreed. A threat that needed to be dealt with, and soon. Maria was silent as they discusses going after it as soon as there was a break in the semester, around thanksgiving it seemed would be the biggest gap for them to make their attempt. And so Maria watched all of the others leave the room until it was just her and Britney. Brit looked at Maria with concern and put a small hand on her shoulder.

"You will help us, right Mar?" She asked, with her eyes big and hopeful. "I don't think we'll stand a chance without you...."

Maria sighed and ran her hand through her hair, feeling the small scar at the back of her head. She wasn't afraid of Pennywise, never was, but she didn't want to fight him, or kill him. She enjoyed the time she had spent with him, having almost forgotten that it would be temporary due to his hibernation. She looked at Britney, with her wide eyes and frail figure. Maria knew that if she did not at least try to help them, Pennywise would kill all of them. They would not stand a chance against a cornered beast with that sort of strength.

"I don't know Brit." Maria said, honestly. "I think it's a stupid idea but...I don't think I could just let you all go down there by yourselves. I need to think on it."

Britney nodded as Maria grabbed her coat and slipped her boots on. Brit asked no questions, she had gotten used to Maria going out at night. So Maria left and started to make her way to the place where she would normally meet Pennywise, an old sewer drain in a back alley.

She took a seat on an old chair someone had left there and took out her phone, just looking at random stuff as she waited. As usual there was no sound when he came around to her, only the slight smell of moist earth. She looked up and saw him staring at her, blood still on his mouth from his kill. She sighed and stood up, going over to him and kissing him. He kissed her back, she was able to taste copper on his tongue. After the kiss she lead him over to their secluded spot, a place where no one would see them before sitting down.

"What happened?" He asked as he sat next to her, one warm arm wrapping around her shoulders. She sighed and looked into those golden eyes, trying to think of what to say.

"Their going to come after you in November, near thanksgiving." She said bluntly. Pennywise stared at her for a moment before sighing and running his hand through his bright red hair. He didn't seem too surprised, but certainly frustrated. He seemed to think on it for a moment before turning back to Maria.

"Are you gonna help them, Maria?" He asked plainly. She stared back before nodding, leaning back against the wall.

"They've been my only friends for a long time." She stated. "I don't want them to do it, but I can't let them go down their knowing they'll die. I can ignore all of the other people you've killed, I don't know them. These people I know."

He nodded, seeming to understand. He looked almost sad at what she said but still, she had to accept the fact that the contentment she had been experiencing up until now was about to vanish. Already her body was feeling a longing for his touch again, but she had to ignore it. How could he sleep with her knowing that, in about a month, she was going to try and kill him?

So, needless to say, she was quite surprised to feel his hand on her lower back as he pulled her closer to him. His eyes were not shining as brightly, but they were still intense as he kissed her deeply, his other hand snaking up under her shirt to grab her breast. She let out a deep moan and clung to his arms as he pulled away, a smile on his lips.

"Well then, we have until November to enjoy ourselves, don't we?" He said with his high, trill voice. She stared at him for a moment before smiling herself, her hands reaching up and pulling him down for another kiss. He pulled her shirt off over her head and unhooked her bra quickly, moving his mouth down to cover one nipple as he started to work on her pants. She leaned back and bit her lip as she gently stroked his hair, her body feeling all tingly as all of her nerves responded to his touches. He started to tug her jeans down violently, he was losing control again. She thought, for a moment, to refuse him. To push him away to make it easier to face him in a month, but as he started to turn her over onto her hands and knees she complied, her body aching for the rough pleasure he was about to supply for her.

Just like their first time, in the shower, he mounted her hard and fast, plunging into her with a force that nearly knocked her over. No love, no gentleness, but the pure feral thrusts of an animal breeding. Her pride did not make her angry or humiliated, but instead made her feel even more proud, knowing that this infinitely old beast had chosen her as it's mate. She took comfort in the face that, despite the ferocity of his thrusts, making her knees tremble and her arms give out, there was no pain. She knew there would be no blood, no soreness, not even bruises were his hands were clamped onto her hips. As he slammed in, right against her most sensitive spot, she knew she would climax multiple times before he was done, and in the end they would both be satisfied.

Knowing all of these things, she was able to forget about November, about David and about Britney's plea. Right then, it was just them, the only sound being of their breaths and moans and the sound of flesh slapping together. The light of the city did not reach them in their spot, nore the smell of anything much eachother.

16. Chapter 16

Author's note; I feel the need to give an extra warning at the beginning of this chapter. DO NOT READ if you are triggered by violence, Sexual Violence, or very disturbing imagery. This chapter is one of the more intense ones, as we are, amazingly, getting very close to the climax of the story. For those of you who do read please understand the warning and intent I stated back in chapter one, and I really hope you enjoy the chapter. This one took a while to write but in the end I am very pleased with the end result. I really look forward to reviews on this one! ENJOY!

Shatter

The fun, blissful days of summer were officially over for the group of six, as October rolled around and they all started to make their preparations for the second Thursday in November. Charlie surprised everyone by revealing that he had been taking shooting lessons, and even though it would be some time before he got his license, he could fire fairly well, if Maria would let him use one of her father's hunting rifles. Maria was, of course, hesitant, and did not hesitate to point out that a rifle in the sewers would cause all of them to go deaf, so, he would settle with her dad's little revolver. Luckily for her, she had a dad who just didn't give a shit.

Patricia and Britney, probably the two weakest of the group, were coming up with strategy. They agreed that they should be there mostly for the sake of drawing IT in, while Maria, David, Charlie, and Mateo did damage. Mateo, of course, insisted that the two of them still try and take some sort of weapon. He believed that their only chance would be to all attack at once. David thought they should try and lure IT into a more narrow tunnel, so it would have less ability to move. Charlie said the more space the better.

Maria wasn't sure if she was worried or relieved that their planning was a mess. She knew it would be bad, either way. She was going to end up losing something important to her, either the people that have been her friends for most of her childhood, with the exception of Patricia, but still she had grown mildly fond of the brat, or she would lose Pennywise, the first person to ever seem to kind of understand

her mindset. Either option stunk, and that put her in an extremely bad mood.

She still constantly stated that it was a bad idea, and they were being stupid and were going to die if they went after "IT", but they all insisted that she was just, understandably, afraid of "IT". David had a growing impatience with Maria, often glaring at her slightly when she spoke her objections.

"For Fuck's sake, Maria, it sound like you're trying to protect IT." He said at one point as they all hung out in his dorm room. "What did the knock to your head PERMANENTLY scramble your brains?"

"Fuck you David." Maria spat back, in a very uncharacteristic hostility. "I'm not a fucking idiot for NOT wanting you idiots to go get killed."

The two of them nearly came to blows over it, if it wasn't for Mateo and Britney, they probably would have. Maria was growing impatient with David's changes, with his new attitude and clinginess. She had noticed him starting to follow her, whenever she went out, so did Pennywise, making their meeting much harder to keep secret. More often than not he would have to go to her as Penn, take her to some nice place to eat or a movie, you know, an actual DATE, and they could only, FINALLY, touch each other when David was gone. A few times he didn't leave at all, and the frustration in both of them had been building all night, so, for once, Pennywise and Maria rented a hotel room for the night. And when they both noticed David was trying to peek into the window, they decided to just let him watch as she made love to "Penn"

The human form was attractive, sure. And he maintained a similar body shape to Pennywise, slim but muscled, but it wasn't quite the same. Maria almost felt like she was making love to a stranger, and Pennywise felt like he was lying to her. But, still, sex is sex, and in the end they both had their climax, but it was the least satisfying sex they had ever had. It was Pennywise who noticed, while tucking them both under the covers for some cuddles, that David was no longer there. Apparently he could no longer "Smell his stench." at that point, so they could both drop their acts.

Maria was too tired for another round, despite wanting to. So they just layed there in the bed, Maria with her head on Pennywise's shoulder, just watching the news on the old, hotel TV.

"The total number of missing peoples has reached the thirties now. Still no leads have been found. Speculation has arisen that Snowbowl might be closed, this winter, in order to try and keep people safe. I'm sure everyone is thinking the same thing right now, Will this nightmare ever end?"

The news anchor looked pale and tired, like he hadn't been sleeping. Maria started to wander, Did Pennywise kill his son? His wife? Or had he simply been working on this story for too long? She turned her eyes to Pennywise, now looking like the clown she had been drawn to. His face was blank, well as blank as a clown's face can be. His golden eyes were only partially watching the TV as one hand brushed through the tips of her hair.

"How long do you have, before you go back to sleep?" She asked. His eyes closed slowly and he let out a deep sigh before turning his gaze to her, brushing her bangs away from her face.

"Not long." He said. "I can feel the lethargy already growing. I suspect maybe another month."

"Can't you go to sleep earlier?" She asked. "I mean, if you do, then they won't be able to go after you, right?" He gave a small chuckle shrugged, turning over onto his side so that he was facing her completely.

"I COULD, but when I wake up in Twenty-Seven years I'll be even more hungry." He explained. "That's why the number is so high this time. I was forced into early hibernation back in 1989. I don't normally take this much."

Maria sighed. She didn't want him to be that hungry again, Flagstaff was a small town, and he's already taken a chunk out of the population. Being a hunter, she knew the effects of over-hunting in one area. She leaned her head forward against his chest, his thin fingers making small circles on her lower back, feeling soothing. There was silence between them for a while before Pennywise spoke,

his voice different than it had ever been. An ethereal gentleness that seemed to wash over her senses, a crack not caused by amusement, but what hinted at regret.

"I'm sorry, Maria. I'm going to have to kill them."

She sighed. She knew it, she had known it ever since David got it into his head to drag everyone down into the sewers. They were hunting him, and he was trying to survive. She didn't blame either party, or....maybe she blamed both of them? She wasn't sure, in all honesty. She found herself wrapping her arms around his waist, hugging him tightly.

"I know. You don't have to apologise." She said softly. "And I'm sorry I'm gonna be with them..."

Pennywise nodded as well and hugged her back, taking in a deep breath as he buried his face in her hair. Maria kind of wanted to cry. She hadn't cried since she was a little girl, but she could feel those tears trying to build up in her eyes. She refused to let them fall though. The two of them simply laid together in bed, Pennywise holding onto Maria, and Maria holding on to Pennywise. Both of them were thinking how odd it was for this to happen. How could they have grown so attached to someone who was so different, not even the same species? It was bizarre, but still they enjoyed the warmth of each other's arms as Maria fell asleep, and Pennywise spent the night keeping watch.

Maria returned to her dorm room rather late, the next morning, about Ten. Britney was already out, probably on a date with Mateo, when she entered the room. She threw her coat on the raised bed she had claimed as her own and started to pull a new set of clothes out of her mini-closet. The simple green sweat-shirt was all she needed to block out the autumn wind that day, she suspected it would be oddly warm for October. She grabbed her little mesh bag of soap and shampoo to make her way to the Dorm showers, when there was a knock on the door. She sighed and put her things down to go and open it, seeing David, with bags under his eyes and his new, blonde hair disheveled over his forehead.

He didn't wait to be invited, he simply pushed past Maria and into

the room. Maria sighed and closed the door, speaking with an exasperated, very sarcastic tone.

"Why yes, you may come in, please make yourself comfortable." She rolled her eyes and turned to the athlete, folding her arms over her chest. David looked at her with an odd expression, something of a mix between anger, fear, and sadness. She frowned at him, a curiosity piqued in the back of her head. *I...think I should be afraid right now....* She thought, letting the logic of the situation take hold of her.

"You came home late." He said, leaning against her bed. Maria raised an eyebrow and decided it would be best to stay near the door.

"I was with Penn all night." She said bluntly. "Which you already knew. I don't appreciate you stalking my dates, by the way. You're not good at it."

David gave a small twitch at her bluntness, his eyes seeming to grow even more angry at the thought that he was seen. Maria knew she was right, if she had been normal she would have been afraid right now, but instead that stupid curiosity was driving her to stay, to figure this out, like a puzzle.

"Who is Penn, really?" He asked and Maria squinted her eyes slightly. "I looked him up, not in the phone book, no facebook, Twitter, Instagram, no social media at all. I couldn't even find him on a background search. I asked at all of the Denny's in town, and none of them have an employee named Penn, not now or in the past."

Maria gaped at him. He had fucking RESEARCHED him?! Who the heck does that when it's someone you DIDN'T meet online?! She was pissed. Even if she wasn't dating a human-eating clown this was delving way too much into her personal life.

"How, fucking, dare you." She hissed at him. "That's none of your fucking business, now get out before I kick your ass." She moved away from the door to let him out, and when he started to move forward, she thought he would. That is until a hand came up and covered her mouth and nose.

The cloth in his palm had some form of medical-smelling liquid on it,

that made Maria start to feel dizzy, like she was about to pass out. Still able to keep a clear head, and not wanting David to get whatever he wants, she swung one leg up and hit, with a good amount of force, right between David's legs.

He let out a wheezy gasp as his hand fell away from her mouth and they both fell onto the floor. David was clutching his precious jewels in pain as Maria tried to shake the fuzzyness out of her head. She was lucky that she acted fast enough not to pass out, but she couldn't see too strait right then. She looked at the door, David was in the way. So she started to stumble/crawl away from him, towards Britney's dresser, that had a few, heavy looking knick knacks on it that she might be able to use.

Unfortunately, David having been a soccer player, he had been pretty used to the occasional kick to the balls, and Maria wasn't even wearing cleats. He was faster than she was at that moment, and before she could reach the dresser he was ontop of her, using his weight to pin her down underneath him. She managed to turn over to face him, but almost instantly he pinned her arms with his knees, the bone digging into her wrists with so much force and weight she thought they were going to snap.

She was about to tell him to back off when his hands started to pull at her shirt. She had to think for a second before she realised what he was going to do. She twisted and pulled, trying to knock him off or free her hands, but he was just too heavy for her in her mildly-drugged haze. The thin knit of her shirt tore with some effort, leaving her chest almost bare, the dangling threads ticking at her stomach and sides as he started to rip at her bra as well.

She started to kick, her anger growing more and more intense as David started to touch her in ways she really didn't like. She never screamed though, and no tears came to her eyes as he slid his hand under the top of her jeans. Just more and more anger. *Get it over with, if you can. I'm gonna fucking kill you once I have my hands free.* She thought as he moved, obviously trying to find some way to keep her down while he had his way.

Maria noticed the smell first, but David definitely heard the deep, angry snarling roar. David looked up for a brief moment before being

thrown, literally, off of Maria. Maria sat up and blinked at the Pennywise she hadn't quite seen before. He was crouching next to her, his face turned solely on David, his yellow eyes ringed with red, dozens of razor like teeth poking out between red lips. She remembered fighting him before, but back then he was hungry and amused, right now, he was seriously pissed. *Two bucks fighting for a female? How quaint.* She thought as she slid back and leaned against Brit's dresser, watching what was going to unfurl in front of her, while waiting for the haze to wear off.

David had hit the wall, hard. There was actually a crack in it from where he had impacted. Still he managed to pull himself up to his feet and glared back at Pennywise, not a hint of fear in those dark eyes. He grabbed the small broom She and Brit had bought and held in both of his hands, like some sort of bat, before moving towards Pennywise. He raised the broom over his head to attack but Pennywise grabbed it and pushed him back, letting out a loud screeching growl as he swiped at David with, what looked like, werewolf claws. David was fast enough to back out of the way and swing again, this time the tin handle of the broom hitting Pennywise in the head.

Pennywise made a small grunt, but was clearly not really hurt by the impact, Maria had hit him harder with that golf club a few months back. And it didn't help that the broom was flimsy and broke on impact. Still, David continued to lunge at the clown, now trying to stab him with the sharp end that was created when it broke.

Actually seeing the fight was absolutely fascinating, and there was no doubt that she was firmly on Pennywise's side at this moment. David was holding much better than she had expected, clearly having the pros of being an athlete. Still, the way Pennywise fought was so curious. He could move abnormally fast, and his movements were jerky and sudden, very unpredictable. She watched as he changed different parts of his body to different things, from werewolf like claws, to some sort of spider-like appendage. She saw hands and tentacles, and various other things reach out of his mouth to try and grab David, but for some reason, those forms always dropped back into the clown.

Maria frowned at what was happening, her head finally starting to

clear. Pennywise was...faltering. He was breathing hard, and on occasion she could see a small spurt of blood fly upwards as David hit him. David was winning. Maria didn't understand. In pure strength, speed, and intelligence, Pennywise should have beat David, no problem so why....?

"*You're not afraid.*" Those words Pennywise had used to explain why he wouldn't kill her came flooding back to memory. David wasn't afraid of Pennywise right now, and Pennywise used and fed off of fear. That's why she had been able to hurt him, and why David was now.

She watched in shock as David practically pinned Pennywise to the floor, having thrust the sharp end of the broken broom into his shoulder. Pennywise let out a shriek as blood poured out of the wound. Maria looked up and saw an old snow globe on Britney's dresser. She stood up and grabbed it, it was fairly heavy.

She didn't hesitate for a moment as she went up behind David, raised the globe above her head, and brought it down on the back of his. There was an oddly satisfying dull crack and David crumpled and rolled away almost instantly. Maria didn't drop the globe as she knelt down next to Pennywise as he sat up, pulling the broom handle from his shoulder. Maria put an arm around his back and pulled him up to his feet, Pennywise clutching to her shoulder as he did so.

"Thanks." Pennywise said, his voice thick with a growl. Maria just shrugged.

"Maria, get away from IT!" David said, drawing their attention. He was on his knees, holding the back of his head, looking at Maria with concern. *What the hell is wrong with him?* She wandered as she pulled Pennywise closer to herself. She was a bit chilly, with her shirt torn. David watched her with concern in his eyes, concern that was slowly growing to something more desperate. She felt Pennywise stand up straighter and she turned to him, watching as a toothy smile spread across his face, reminding her of a piranha joker. Pennywise wrapped his arm around Maria's waist and pulled her closer to himself before turning and leaning in.

She had no reason to refuse the kiss, as a matter of fact it was a

wonderful change from what was going on a moment ago. She put her hands on his chest as he kissed her deeply, his tongue sliding into her mouth, pulling her bared chest against his own. When they pulled away they both looked back at David. He was shaking, eyes wide. Maria understood. NOW he was afraid.

"Maria..." Pennywise drew her attention again, his face had a subtle, sinister smile on it, his eyes glowing with hunger. Maria knew what he wanted, but he wouldn't if she told him not to. It was mildly startling, knowing that, in that moment, she had some control over this beast. She looked back at David, who was looking at her with shock and disbelief, almost pleading with her that this wasn't true. Maria felt that anger in her gut again as she let her arm drop from Pennywise's shoulder.

"Bon Appetite." She said plainly. Pennywise let out a pleased giggle and started to walk towards David. David looked between Pennywise and Maria, the situation clearly clicking in his head. Maria saw his eyes dart towards the door and she moved at the same time he did.

She was able to block the door, grabbing the taller man by the arms and sweeping one leg behind his ankles, causing him to lose balance. Now she was the one pinning him down. She held his arms by his side as he started to try and thrash. She would have been thrown off, simply due to weight difference, but she felt a familiar heat press against her back. She turned right into a kiss as Pennywise added his weight to her own, keeping David firmly down. She could hear an oddly satisfying whimper from David as he was forced to watch them kiss. She turned to look at him as Pennywise's lips moved to behind her ear and to down her neck and partially bared shoulder. One hot, gloved hand reached around her and began to massage her bared breast as he hissed in her ear, the glowing of his eyes almost distracting out of the corner of her eye.

"May I have you, Maria?" He had never asked like that before. Normally he just gave her the opportunity to refuse, which she rarely did. She looked at David, seeing the growing fear in his eyes. She was able to read his fears almost as easily as Pennywise in that moment. He DREADED the thought of seeing her be taken by someone other than himself, he feared seeing her accept anyone besides him. She felt heat grow in her stomach as Pennywise continued to touch her in

all the placed David had. His satin covered hands felt right, soothing and enticing. She let out a slightly shaky breath, a new smile on her lips that had never been there before. She WANTED David to suffer.

"Knock yourself out." She replied, getting a deep chuckle as a response as he tore away the rest of her ruined shirt. She kept her eyes on David as Pennywise pulled down her jeans and slid two fingers inside of her, causing her to give out a deep moan. David had gone completely silent, and so pale his skin was nearly translucent. She could see tears starting to stream down his cheeks. It was so intense, seeing that fear as she enjoyed the touch of her lover, like a drug in her system. As soon as she felt Pennywise lean over her again, one hand reaching down to hold David in place, she reached up and pulled the tie out of her hair, letting the thick strands fall down into David's face. She felt hot lips at the back of her neck as the fingers were removed and replaced with his member.

It felt larger than usual as he officially mounted her, pushing in slow and deep. She let out a breath as her body reacted to the penetration, all of her muscles tensing with pleasure. Once he was in, he was still, taking the time to worship her neck, back, shoulders, and ears with his lips and tongue. It was both amazing and infuriating at the same time. She wanted him to move, to bring her to a high, but the gentle nips and licks he was placing on her skin sent her nerves into a tingling frenzy. She could almost forget their little audience, if it wasn't for the fact that his suffering fear was adding to her pleasure.

Her nerves were so sensitive that, when he started to move inside her, she let out a small cry of pleasure. It wasn't hard, or fast, or even that deep, it was slow and gentle, a soft rocking motion that was simply enjoying each other in that moment. She tilted her head back to find his lips again, a gentle kiss that, for the first time, resembled that of two lovers. This was so different from the past, were it was simply for the pleasures of sex, either equal and passionate or simply letting him have complete control in a breeding frenzy. Despite being on her hands and knees, with him behind her, she felt in complete control, her hips rock with him rather than in response to him, anything she wanted he gave her without so much as speaking a word. They were together in that moment, both making love to each other, and both holding down prey.

Pennywise's voice was so soft and gentle when he spoke, Maria couldn't help but lean against him even more, his chin resting on her shoulder as he whispered in her ear.

"Close your eyes love, I don't want you to look into the Deadlights..." She was curious for a moment, but it was over-powered by his voice. She closed her eyes and nuzzled against his cheek. She heard David start to whimper as Pennywise moved against her, she felt him struggle against their combined weights. She could see a very bright light start to shine on the other side of her eyelids, causing her to squint them shut even tighter. There was what sounded like the start of a scream before the form beneath her went still. She wondered if he was dead before there was another shudder and a cracking, ripping sound as the light vanished. She felt something hot and wet splash up onto her face and chest before there was silence. Pennywise petted her hair gently and let her know it was safe to open her eyes again.

She opened her eyes to no longer see David's frightened face in front of her. As a matter of fact, his entire head was gone. The hot liquid on her face was his blood, it had spurted up from the tattered remains of a neck that was just below her. She stared at it as she felt Pennywise move just a little faster, her breathing getting heavier and her body shaking.

Maria was unable to fully describe how she felt as they climaxed together, over the corpse of a man she had once called a friend. As her lover let his weight rest on her for a moment while he caught his breath she turned to him, saw the red on his chin and collar, the deep glow in his eyes. He was staring at her too, reading her reaction to what had just transpired. She could see a fear in his eyes as well, a hesitation to say or do anything as he simply waited. She reached up and gently petted the side of his face, blood that had spilled onto her hand creating a smear on his cheek.

"Would I be crazy for saying I love you, Pennywise?" She asked, a somewhat hazed smile on her blood-smeared face. Pennywise smiled and giggled, turning into that hand and kissing it, licking off some of the blood.

"Probably, by human standards." He said, clearly amused. "But I

suppose I'm equally as crazy for being in love with my food."

Maria's grin widened as she kissed him, their laughter growing more and more intense as they reveled in blood and love.

17. Chapter 17

Author's note; a shorter chapter but we are almost there! With enough coffee, and insanity I might actually be able to finish this story by, well what do you know, Thanksgiving. :) I hope you all enjoy the story and will follow me on till the end!

Descent

The two of them were unable to move for nearly ten minutes after making love, the both of them simply enraptured in laughter. Eventually they had to come down from their high and figure out what to do with this mess. Maria was sure someone must have heard the commotion, but the fact is, ripping off someone's head goes a bit beyond self defense in a human court. So, while Maria washed off the blood and disposed of her ruined shirt, Pennywise took care of the rest of the cleanup.

Upon walking out of the shower with blood-stained clothes in a plastic bag, she was amazed at how clean the room was. The blood and body were both gone, even the broom was gone. The snow globe Maria had used was back in it's original spot, and the crack in the wall was fixed up. The sound of heavy knocks on the door didn't surprise them, the situation had been pretty loud. Maria shrugged at Pennywise, who took on his "human form" for lack of a better word, and the two of them went over and opened the door.

Two police men were standing there, in their blue uniforms. They looked at the two of them for a moment before the older gentleman spoke, his voice sounded tired and gruff, like he was just getting ready to end a long shift when he got called over to this location.

"Excuse me, we got a call about a lot of disturbing noise coming from this room. People seemed to think someone was being attacked or something?" He was polite, despite his tiredness, so Maria gave him a sweet smile and shook her head, her wet hair flopping over her eyes momentarily.

"No, no fight. I'm so sorry, I was watching some horror movie with my boyfriend and we sat on the remote, the volume went crazy." She

said softly, her cheeks going a red like she was embarrassed about the situation. "I'm so sorry you got called here, you guys are busy enough with...well...everything."

The police man nodded and craned his head to look pass Maria and into her dorm room, obviously looking for anything suspicious.

"Do you mind if we come in and take a look around?" He asked, still politely. Maria shrugged and looked at Penn, who smiled at the officers.

"Not at all, please take your time." He said and stepped aside, holding my hand as the officers entered the dorm room and started to look around.

Maria was as calm as ever as she watched the police scour the room, practically with a fine-toothed comb, the younger gentleman pulling out a notepad and facing the two of them, obviously about to ask some questions.

"Has anyone else been in the room today?" He asked and Maria shrugged.

"Well my roommate Britney was here this morning, but she's out with her boyfriend. And my friend David was here a little bit ago." She said, leaning against the wall as Penn wrapped a hand around her waist.

"How long ago was David here?" He asked. Maria thought for a bit and looked at her watch.

"Maybe...twenty minutes ago? Just a little bit before you got here." She explained and watched as the police man scribbled down notes.

"Do you know where he might have gone?" He asked and Maria tilted her head slightly.

"Maybe back to his dorm? Or out somewhere? He didn't say." She bit her lip and took a quick glance at Penn. "Um....is David in trouble?"

"What's your friend's last name?" He asked.

"Greene..."

"I can't go into details, but we have found some....disturbing things that seem to surround your friend. I highly recommend not being alone with him." The officer said, closing his book and turning back to his partner, who was approaching them again.

"Room's all clean. You two be safe now, and stick together. Thank you for your cooperation." The officer gave them a kind smile, which they both returned, before seeing the officers out of the dorm. Once they were alone again Pennywise dropped his form back into the clown and wrapped his arms around Maria from behind, a tight but gentle hug.

"I wonder what kind of shit they found on him?" Maria said, leaning back into Pennywise's hug. The clown gave a small chuckle and kissed her cheek.

"Apparently a college counselor called the police once because they thought his behavior was sporadic and possibly violent." He said and Maria furrowed her brow, turning to look at him.

"And how the hell do you know that?" She asked, turning in his arms completely. "Are you hunting the campus now?" Pennywise gave an amused chuckle and brushed her hair away from her face, kissing her nose lightly.

"I was always hunting on campus. College kids are easy prey." He explained lightly. "But in that case I was just listening. I keep an eye on the whole town. Only safe thing to do really." Maria rolled her eyes and shook her head, sliding her hands up his satin covered chest. All of the blood was gone from him, no longer on his lips or on his collar, not even a drop on one pom pom button. She looked up at him and pressed herself against his chest. Pennywise smiled and put his hands on her hips, pushing her away, ever so slightly.

"Be careful, Maria." He said with a grin. "Too much of that and I'll have you bent over again." He said softly and Maria reached up, cupping his face in her hands.

"Bend me over all you want." She said slightly. "So long as I can look

at your face on occasion." Pennywise chuckled and nuzzled her hand, kissing the palm gently.

"You really are crazy,aren't you?" He asked, pressing his forehead against hers. She laughed and shrugged.

"Yeah, maybe you knocked all of my screws loose a couple of months ago." She grinned and gave him a kiss. The two of them could have, so easily, fallen into another couple of rounds of sex, but, sadly, Pennywise caught Britney and Mateo's scents. They forced themselves to cool down a bit and Pennywise took on the form of the boyfriend again, just as the dorm door opened up to see the two love birds arm in arm.

"You two are seriously gonna make me vomit." Maria said with a smile. Brit and Mateo laughed and rolled their eyes at her.

"You're not one to talk, Maria." Britney said, glancing at Penn. "And just what were you two doing in here alone?"

"About to have extremely hot, passionate sex, but you two interrupted us." Maria's dry tone sent Penn into a fit of giggles, or maybe it was the shocked look on Britney's face? Both were very amusing.

"Have you two actually....?" Brit asked, as if it was some horrible thing. Maria just shrugged and brushed her hand through her hair.

"Hey, if you want to be , good for you." Maria said. "But I like sex. Simple as that."

Brit just shook her head and covered her now bright red face with her hands. Mateo had a small grin on his face and Maria couldn't help but feel a little sorry for the guy. *I kinda wonder if he'll pop the question just to get some ass....* Maria thought idly as they settled into a less personal conversation. As the day waned on, eventually Penn had to go take care of some things, maybe going off hunting again, and left the room, just as Charlie and Patricia showed up.

The group had been meeting in this room in the hopes of preparing for when November came around, but after sitting together for

several hours, David, of course, never showed up. After another few hours the majority of the group started to get very anxious. David had always been the first to show up and the last to leave with these meetings, and he hadn't even called. When Patricia tried his phone she got voice mail.

"I'm gonna go check his dorm." Charlie said, standing up. "Patricia how about you call his home. Maybe he went there?"

And so Charlie left the room and Patricia continued to make calls. Ten minutes later when Charlie came back with the news that David hadn't been back to the dorm all day, Maria decided to tell them what the police had told her. The group seemed mildly shocked, but not as surprised as she had expected them to be.

"Well...he's been taking on a lot of stress because of IT." Mateo said, logically. "Maybe it's taken its toll on him."

"Oh god...what....what if IT got him!?" Patricia jumped to the worst, and for once the right, answer. "What if IT found out what he was doing and took him out!?"

"Don't do that to yourself, Patricia." Maria said softly. "I bet he just had to take some time away in order to cool down. If no one hears from him by tomorrow we'll call the cops and then start worrying about IT."

The group agreed on that. Wait until tomorrow to hear from him and then call the police. If they aren't able to find anything that might lead to where he is, then that means IT got him. And so Maria and Britney watched the other three leave the room, the two boys walking Patricia back to her car before returning to their own dorm, and then quickly going to bed.

Long story short, in the end the group decided that yes, IT had taken and probably killed David. Maria did make a note to remind them that IT had told them to leave IT alone and IT would leave them alone. David had continued to poke the bear and, though she never said this part aloud, he got what he deserved. Maria was hoping that with David gone and a new fear in their hearts, they would give up on their plans, but no. Patricia took up the reins and started to pull

the group together, now using vengeance as a means to push them all towards their deaths.

Maria kept Pennywise up to date on all of their plans, and he explained to her what was actually the best way for them to get to his chamber. Maria had completely given up on the idea of actually trying to kill Pennywise, she had no desire too. And so, she and Pennywise were creating their own little plan. Simply put, make them THINK they kill Pennywise. By the time they get around to fighting him, Pennywise would be ready to go back to sleep. It worked out well, time wise.

"There is something I intend to test though." Pennywise said one night while cuddling with Maria. "Something I've been wandering for a while."

"What is it?" Maria asked, her curiosity piqued. Pennywise seemed to think for a few moments before shaking his head.

"If I tell you the test won't be accurate. I need you to respond as you." He explained. Maria pouted, a very rare and amusing sight, but accepted the fact that she was one of the variables.

And so they all trudged their way through the rest of October, Halloween being particularly unnerving due to the tendency for monster based costumes. Finally, however, November came around, the college was closed for Thanksgiving weekend, and the group had all of their plans put together.

After gathering various "Weapons" that included baseball bats, switch blades, and a small revolver from Maria's dad, the group of five made their way to the West Street Skate Park, where there was a large drain that led into the sewers, next to an irrigation ditch. The gate on the tunnel entrance was loose, like someone had pried it open, quite the feat considering how heavy it was. Maria and Mateo had to work together to lift the iron bars to let Patricia, Charlie, and Britney into the cavern. Once inside, Maria instantly took the lead, turning on her flashlight to look into the tunnels ahead.

"You guys sure about this? No turning back after this point...." She said, looking over her shoulder at them. All four of them were

shaking, Mateo out right looked like he wanted to bolt, but they held their ground and began to push forward into the darkness.

18. Chapter 18

Author's note; and here we are! I hope you all enjoy!

The tunnels

The smell was a very bizarre thing to experience for Maria. At first as just about all she could smell was damp and rotting grass, from where the weeds had overgrown during the summer, but very slowly, as the group of five went deeper and deeper into the sewers, the stench of waste started to become stronger and stronger. Sewer tunnels are amazingly complex in structure, so it took them at least an hour before reaching one of the main tunnels, where a thick brownish water slowly moved past, down a small ravine made out of concrete. Luckily for the group, the newer tunnels had small pathways along the walls, that allowed them to avoid stepping in the water, at least for now. The tunnel was large enough for them all to stand up straight as they looked down the two paths they could go.

"Which way?" Britney asked Maria, whispering slightly as a shaking hand grasped Maria's coat arm. Maria pretended to think for a little bit before looking down at the water again, seeing which way it went and remembering what Pennywise had told her.

"Follow the water." She said. "It'll take us downward, and I'm pretty sure IT will be deeper."

The group nodded and followed Maria as she lead on, careful of her footing on the slightly slimy cement below her feet. She was already regretting wearing a coat for this, it was surprisingly warm down here, causing her to sweat as she moved down, trying her hardest to push the stench of sewage out of her mind. Eventually she had to stop and hand her light to Britney in order to take off her coat, tying it around her hips before continuing on.

"I can understand why you always wear jeans and tank-tops now." Patricia said, who was wearing an oddly similar outfit to Maria's. Only her jeans were thinner and had little jewels on the back pockets, and her boots were, of course, designer. Maria couldn't help but think that Patricia was gonna end up with shorts if she were to fall on her

knees. Those thin jeans tore so easily.

"It's comfortable and practical." Maria stated with a shrug. "That's all there is too it."

"Would you two hush!" Mateo hissed at the two girls, his hands shaking so hard it was causing the light of his flashlight to bounce around the room. "IT might hear you!"

"Oh, I think IT already has...." Maria said, stopping and pointing her flashlight ahead. Way down the tunnel, at the very edge of the lights range, there was a white face with red lips smiling at the group. And in an instant it was gone. Maria wanted to laugh. Her friends were all rattled by the situation, apparently that had been efficiently creepy. But instead she kept a straight face, shook her head, and continued forward, the thick rubber soles of her boots making dull, echoing clacks against the pavement. It took them a moment to get moving again, but eventually the others did start to walk along with her.

They followed the water for at least three hours, moving at a decent pace while trying to be silent, no one saying a word. The little walkway wasn't really wide enough to encourage walking side-by-side, so they had to go single file, with Maria in the lead and Charlie keeping rear watch. After the first hour Maria had to slow her pace to accommodate the less athletic people of the group, by the third hour, Patricia and Britney needed to 'Rest'.

"Just, like, ten minutes..." Patricia said, leaning against the wall with an 'eew' face. Maria sighed and folded her arms.

"You know if you get off your feet now they'll just hurt more once you start walking again..." She said, but they ignored her. *I thought they wanted me along because I'm "Strong, Resourceful, Athletic, and knowledgeable"* She thought, remembering all of their arguments to try and get her to tag along. *What good is that shit if you don't listen?* And so the group "Rested" for ten minutes, the other four all passing around a canteen of water, that MARIA had brought, and rubbing their sore feet. Maria stayed up on her feet, walking around and keeping an eye out. Occasionally she would catch a glimpse of yellow eyes watching them from deeper down the tunnels, but she didn't say a word. For right now she was just hoping that their little plan

worked. That her friends will all think they killed him and leave him to sleep, at least until 2043 when he woke up again.

Maria had to frown at that. She would be in her mid forties by the time he woke back up, by then she would be a doctor working in some hospital, maybe not even in Arizona. If everything went "right" this could, potentially, be the last time she saw her dear human devouring, dancing clown. The thought made her unbelievably sad. Even if she was here when he got back, who is to say that things would just continue like they were? Twenty-seven years is a long time.

She quickly wiped the uncharacteristic tears away from her eyes as she looked forward again, seeing not just eyes, but his face in the darkness. His face was sad, despite the smile painted on it. It was beyond clear that he was thinking something similar. Maria let herself smile at him, and he gave an equally sad smile in return before backing away into the darkness.

"Alright, up and at em. We gotta keep moving." Maria said as she started to kick the others into standing positions. She had been right, of course. Almost as soon as they started to walk again there was a series of pained moans as their feet protested to the actions.

After a few complaints and bickering, they all quieted down, either because their feet just went numb or they realised this was harder than they thought it would be, and they all just moved forward at a snail's pace. Maria kept an eye on her watch, seeing just how long it was taking them to even GET to the lower tunnels. Four hours, Five, Six....nearly eight hours passed in those tunnels before Maria caught sight of an old, rusted metal door with a sign on it. She got a little closer to read it, having to wipe off some dusty mildew to read it clearly.

Old Tunnels, Do not Enter without proper

Authorization and protection.

Maria turned to the group and gave a slightly sarcastic smile.

"Well look at that, we're about a fourth of the way done." She said

bluntly and they all just gaped at her.

"Only a fourth!?" Patricia asked shrilly. "What are the other three parts?!" Maria held up one finger.

"Finding IT's camber." Second finger. "Fighting IT." Third. "Getting back out."

The group let out a collective moan, but Maria ignored them as she turned back to the door and pulled on the old, rusted handle. It took some effort, but eventually the handle turned and, with a very loud screech, the door opened, sending out a wave of shockingly cold air that had the smell of dampness, waterlogged vegetables, and just being old. Maria smiled at the smell, while the others all fell silent at remembering just how IT had smelled when it came after them. Maria stood in the doorway, shining her light down into the darkness. There was a small drop in the floor, right into water. She sighed and hopped on down into it, her boots making a thick splash as she quickly surveyed her surroundings. The tunnel was still circulating water, amazingly, but it was much clearer than the stuff in the new tunnels. She suspected it was mostly rainwater but she still had no wish to get it ON her skin.

Maria helped the others down into the tunnel before following what she had said before, and walked with the slowly moving water. She looked around at the tunnel walls and was able to spot little things here and there that caught her interest. Such as what looked like scratch marks, or dark smears that kind of looked like old blood. All of these walls were cracked and covered in moss and mold, and the stink was certainly heavy. She covered a mouth for a moment before turning back to the others to observe them.

Despite all of her own suspicions, Mateo was certainly having the worst time. His back was hunched down, eyes darting all over the place, shaking like a little mouse. Beside him Britney was also, clearly, scared, and held on to Mateo's arm. Patricia and Charlie were both doing...okay. They were still shaking, but they kept their eyes forward and their hands on their respective "weapons". Patricia, in particular, looked very determined behind all of her fluffy clothes and makeup.

And so they continued onward, sludging on slowly and carefully, Maria feeling out in front of her with her toe in case of any other drops in the floor. As they walked Maria went over the map she had made in her mind, based off of what Pennywise had told her.

"Follow the water until you get to an old, iron door. Go through it and then you are in the Old tunnels. Once there keep following the water until you come to a small chamber junction, with a large pipe in the floor. There will be stairs and a door, ignore them. I've marked the proper tunnel, follow it downwards until you reach me."

The instructions had been clear enough, and Maria was pretty good at following instructions, so she followed the water, keeping her eyes forward in hopes of finding that junction chamber before long.

They were in the old tunnels for about an hour, with no sight of that chamber, when a splashing, sloshing sound caught their attention. Maria looked around with her light as the group all stood back to back, in a small circle. She couldn't see anything, but she felt him circling them. She had expected him to at least have a little fun with the situation, so she wasn't too surprised, but it was certainly interesting to see what he was going to do.

"Where is it....?" Mateo whimpered slightly. "I can't see a damn thing."

"Just stay where you are. As long as we stay like this it can't sneak up behind us..." Charlie said, cocking the revolver. Maria smirked to herself when she felt hot lips on the back of her neck a second before that light, playful, very sinister voice spoke from BEHIND them.

"Oh, I can't Char Char?" The trilling, shrill giggle that followed was enough to make Mateo collapse as he spun around with the others to see Pennywise standing right in the middle of their little guard circle they had made. They all backed away, instantly creating a problem.

Maria was right behind IT. She was separated from the rest of them BY that clown. Charlie was, amazingly, the first to act as he raised the gun. Pennywise covered his mouth in an overtly dramatic fashion as he took a step to the side, so that he was right in front of Maria.

"You sure about that Charlie?" He asked, Maria could see his eyes glowing, even from behind him. Charlie looked at Pennywise and then Maria before lowering the gun. It took Maria to realise why, if he had fired and Pennywise moved, he would have hit her.

Everyone sort of jumped at the slightly faltering cry Patricia made as she ran AT Pennywise with her baseball bat, swinging it at him with all of her minimal strength. Pennywise simply jumped up, all the way up, turning and clinging to the ceiling of the tunnel like some sort of silver-satin spider. However his moving did make Patricia's swing go right at Maria's side. Maria had been able to step back a bit, but it still grazed her stomach, causing her to grunt in pain. All of their eyes followed the clown up and watched in terror as he skittered away, on the ceiling.

It took them a little while to calm themselves before Maria turned an irritated stare towards Patricia.

"Ow..." She said bluntly and Patricia just gaped at her. What, she wasn't supposed to be upset about being hit with a bat? Maria rolled her eyes, rubbed her now slightly bruised stomach, and continued to walk down the tunnel.

"Wait...w...we're still gonna go?" Mateo asked, having not moved. "After THAT? I....IT's too fast, and strong....w...w..w..we don't stand a chance...."

"We have to Mateo!" Patricia said. " IT killed David! And a whole bunch of other people!"

"I don't want to end up dead too!" He said, clinging to Britney's arm. "I don't want Brit to end up dead, or you or Charlie or Maria! IT offered us a deal and we should have taken it!"

"Dude, calm down." Charlie said, clearly still shaking himself. "We have to be careful, but it's too late to turn back. If we leave now, It'll just pick us off one by one..."

If you left now he could just go to sleep. Maria thought briefly, a small headache pulling at the back of her head. Logically she wanted to encourage Mateo, agree with him and just get everyone to give up.

BUT she also knew that after today Pennywise was going to sleep for Twenty-Seven years. She had to see him at least once more before then. So she took a breath and walked over to Mateo, putting one hand on his shoulder.

"You're right." SHE said simply. "We should have accepted the deal. David should have let IT be, and we wouldn't be in this mess. BUT we are. It's too late to turn away now. If we leave now, then it's not just us who might get picked off, but if we do survive, it might kill our future children, or their children. Besides, WE have the advantage." She turned to the others who were all staring at her, all pale and scared. "We know what it feeds off of, what it uses to fight! Fear. As long as we are together, we can fight each other's fears, even if our own is too much! We just need to stick together, stay focused, and take heart that we, unlike IT, are not alone."

It took a few moments for it to sink in, but her words did seem to help the group. Mateo was able to take a breath and calm down, Charlie and Patricia both stood a little bit taller, and Britney gave a small smile. *God, that BS sounded like something out of some kids movie.* Maria thought to herself. "*We're gonna win with the power of friendship! Yaaaaay*" But she knew what she said was, to an extent, accurate. So much so that she did worry, worry about whether or not this little pep talk worked too well. She took a moment to gaze into the darkness again, but no golden eyes were staring back. Pennywise must have gone to his chamber to prepare for whatever sort of fight was on it's way. She sighed softly to herself and began to walk again, this time, everyone followed.

The old tunnels were certainly a pain in the ass to get through. Even someone as fit as Maria was starting to breathe hard and wipe sweat from her brow. There were several broken areas of tunnel that had either caved in or, apparently, lost their floors to a cave in on the next level down. At one point one hole in the floor was so large they had to, very carefully, slide along one disgusting wall single file, doing a weird sort of sideways crab walk.

About an hour after that, Patricia nearly had a heart attack when Maria took a step forward and down, into water that came up to her waist. Maria wanted to slap her, for her moment of prissiness about how that was "Disgusting." That water was flipping COLD. Maria

shuddered and pulled her now ruined coat off from around her waist, the leather already heavy from the wet. She threw it to the side and watched where it landed, as something bobbed up from the water. She frowned at the shape and pointed her light at it, showing a pale white foot bobbing in the dark water, holes in it's flesh from where maggots had started to dig in. The group gave a burst of fear and unease at the sight, but Maria stayed calm and simply wandered, *Wich one did that belong to?*

Shaking their fear off of themselves the rest followed Maria into the deeper water, Britney having the hardest time with it, being the shortest of the group. But still they, eventually, moved on through the water. Maria checked her watch again and shook her head. They had set out pretty early, but it was already after noon. They had to have been at this almost eight hours by now. She hadn't thought that these tunnels would go on for so long, but it's not like she was a city planner or anything that WOULD know.

The deep water only continued for about a mile or so before coming to a steep ledge and a smaller tunnel. Maria had to haul herself up, and pull the others up, before she was able to get a good look down the tunnel.

Technically it was more of a hallway, than a tunnel, leading into a slightly larger room. The room was circular in shape, with a large draining tunnel in the floor, going straight down. A set of stairs went up the side of one rounded wall and to a small door that had been boarded up, and at least four other tunnels leading elsewhere into the sewers.

"Well shit." Charlie mumbled softly. "Now were? We're so fucking lost..."

"Don't say that." Mateo hissed at Charlie as Maria started to look around the tunnel entrances carefully, shining her light on, and down, the tunnels. Despite the age, most of the tunnels were in fairly good condition, with only a few cracks here and there, and the slime and moss growing on them. One tunnel, however, really stood out. There were markings all over it and Maria got closer to examine it.

"I...er....think it's this way...." She said to the group, pointing out the

markings. They were scratch marks, deep and gauging, like some nasty, large claws. The group looked at those markings and, yeah, looked like the way. Also looked terrifying.

Maria continued to lead the way, the new path somewhat more dry than the others had been, with only a small trickle of water going down the middle of floor. She was starting to feel mild anxiety, knowing they were getting closer. She would have to pretend to kill Pennywise, and then possibly never see him again, and she didn't want that. Her sadness at the situation continued to play in her head as they all made their way forward in the tunnel.

Another two hours of walking passed before they came to another opening. Maria saw it first, a pile of rubble, that looked like it had once been human belongings, set in what looked to be a large chamber. Maria held up her hand and stopped the group, turning to them and mouthing at them, "This is it.." And pulling out her hunting knife. The group swallowed and started to pull out their own weapons, their hands shaking with anticipation as they did so. Maria listened to the chamber, for any sort of sound that might come from it. There was the sound of water running through pipes, and what sort of sounded like rain. She chanced another glance at her group when she felt a familiar hot hand on the back of her neck.

She got pulled back roughly, into the chamber and around the corner, right into a deep kiss that pissed her against the wall. She heard the others scream, just before looking up at the sad smile on her clown's face.

"And so it begins." He said, jumping away from her just at the group came running in, crouching on the floor, ready to pounce.

19. Chapter 19

Author's note; This chapter was so hard to write, I think I went through about fifteen different variations before I came out with this version, which I like the most. I hope you all enjoy the chapter. Thank you for your continued support.

Second Dance

The heat was gone. The burning heat that had been burrowing itself into her core was now absent, almost as if that last kiss had sucked it all away. She looked at the primitive creature that was crouching in front of her, a cornered animal getting ready to fight, as it's hunters all rounded the corner of the tunnel, calling out HER name. Maria wasn't able to look at her friends, or answer their calls, she just watched the creature in a clown's face back away and circle, ominously staring, those golden eyes promising the heat now absent from her existence.

The cold caused something akin to fear, for Maria, making her wander horrible things as she stood there, for the first time, petrified. The heat made her feel so alive, like she could feel everything when in his embrace, see everything even when her eyes were closed, it had awakened her to a whole new world and existence she had never known possible, now it was cold. Ice had settled into her gut, causing her muscles to tense and shake, her senses dulled in the numbness of an internal winter, she could no longer smell the sewer, or really see what she had once called a lover. He had taken away the heat, he had taken away his animalistic claims to her body. He was setting her free to fall in the future, when he was asleep.

Such a freedom to move on should have been a relief, knowing that she wouldn't be haunted by heat for the next three decades, but it wasn't. She wanted the heat back, to know that he still existed, even if their time together was heat had made her so alive and now with it gone, she felt dead.

No words were spoken before the fight actually started, it was simply a stare off while Maria re-collected her thoughts. Her four friends stood in front of her, defending her, as Britney tried to get Maria to

respond, IT simply paced in front of them, as if waiting, or watching for just the right moment to pounce.

No one was certain about what happened first, all Maria was aware of was that she was pulled out of her new, icy prison by the sound of a gunshot. The loud crack of the revolver echoed in the cavern, causing all of them to cover their ears from the volume of it. Maria was there again, remembering WHY Pennywise had chosen to release her from the heat. She wouldn't let it go to waste. And, while she was at it, give him a few wallops for not warning her first.

The bullet had missed Pennywise, but he had missed Charlie in return. He had lunged at the ginger boy, but the entire group moved in separate directions, causing him to land in the middle of them, right in front of Maria. She hesitated for a split moment before rearing her foot back and swinging it forward. She didn't actually make contact, but Pennywise moved in a way that made it look like she did, his head jerking back sharply as he twisted his body and rocking back up onto his feet. It was NOT a normal movement, and for a moment Maria actually thought about how wrong it was for a human body to twist like that, but she didn't have the time for deep contemplation in that moment.

Patricia came up behind Pennywise and swung her bat at his back, making it hit with a loud THWAK! The screeching cry Pennywise let out made Maria's heart hurt. They had come up with the plan so they he wouldn't have to get hurt, but she supposed it had been naive of her to think he wouldn't get any what so ever during a fight were four people really did want to kill him.

Mateo and Britney went after him together, each from one side, Pennywise grabbed them both and simply tossed them aside with a deep, snarling growl. Maria watched her two friends fly back and tumble onto the hard floor, rolling from the momentum until their backs hit the wall. Patricia swung with her bat again, but he ducked out of the way, twisting and bearing his jagged teeth at her. Maria looked at Charlie who was fumbling to pick up the gun again and shook her head, running at Pennywise and slamming her shoulder into his torso.

He let out a deep grunt as the force sent them both to the floor, Maria

landing on top of him for a second before he turned and pinned her on the floor. The heat was painful now, like the first time she had experienced it. She was certain it would burn her flesh off, but it didn't, it never did. Pennywise smiled at Maria, his long teeth showing, gold eyed rimmed with red. Her beautiful monster.

The crack of another shot, accompanied by a growling screech filled the hall, as a burst of blood spouted from Pennywise's shoulder, and a hot, searing pain wrenched through Maria's. She didn't scream, but simply clenched at it as Pennywise rolled off of her, glaring at the boy with the gun. Maria sat up and looked at the blood dripping out of the hole in her arm. The bullet had gone right through Pennywise and into her.

She stumbled to her feet and looked at Pennywise, seeing the two wounds very clearly against his silver clothes. It had gone into his back, just under his shoulder blade, and out the front of his shoulder. Maria had to guess that if he had been human, that probably would have killed him. She turned and looked at Charlie, who was staring at Pennywise, who was starting to get back to his feet, the small red wounds already vanishing. Maria started to move forward, but a sudden wave of dizziness hit her, and she fell back to her knees, landing in a small puddle with a splash. Pennywise was back on his feet, turning towards the sound of movement near him. He looked at Maria, at her shoulder, and Maria looked down at herself. The puddle she was sitting in was turning red, as were her jeans and tanktop. The pain in her shoulder was horrible, and no matter how hard she pressed her hand against the wound, the bleeding continued.

She looked at Pennywise again and saw his worried face, gold eyes no longer ringed with red, teeth no longer sharp and angled. He started to move towards her, and oh god did she want to do the same. He made it to about a foot from her when a chain came from behind him and encircled his neck, pulling him backwards and off his feet. Mateo had pulled him down, using his abundant strength and mass. Pennywise started to pull at the chain and snarled at Mateo, his teeth growing long again before their eyes, but Mateo simply looped the chain again and forced it into Pennywise's mouth, like a horse, pressing either side of the chain down onto the floor to pin him securely.

Maria saw Pennywise struggle against the chain, his hands were clawing at it as his legs kicked in an effort to gain leverage. Britney, Charlie, and Patricia all came up to Pennywise and started to unload on him. Heavy thumps and slams as a baseball bat slammed into his chest and legs, Britney, being brave, got up close and continued to dig her little knife into him. Charlie was unloading thunderous rounds of bullets into him. Maria grunted against the pain in her shoulder as she pushed herself off the floor, fighting the dizziness caused by blood loss. She stumbled her way towards Pennywise, grabbing something off of the floor, a large iron rod, by the feel of it. Like something you would find at a construction site. Using the rod as a cane, or crutch, she made her way forward, listening to Pennywise grunt and growl in pain as her friends attempted to beat him to death.

Maria found herself coming up next to Charlie, stumbling and breathing hard as she looked down at her clown. He was bleeding from many places, breathing hard with one golden eye closed in pain. She had never expected these people to be so brutal in this. She had expected fear and hesitation, not this massive mugging that was taking place. She wanted to help him, save him, but how? She was on the verge of passing out, the pain in her shoulder was growing numb, not a good sign. The sound of the gun going off next to her was dull now, no longer the defining blasts that it had been at first. She locked eyes with Pennywise and saw his widen as she started to fall again, this time darkness overwhelming her vision.

Pennywise watched as Maria fell to the floor in front of him, right next to the ginger boy with the gun. Her eyes glazed over in the loss of consciousness he had seen several times before from his victims. She was hurt, bad, and needed help. He grunted again against the chain as another blow from the bat cracked one of his ribs, as the blade bit into him again, another bullet in his flesh. It hurt, sweet hell did it hurt, but not as much as seeing Maria start to fade right in front of him.

Screw these kids, and screw the plan.... He thought as anger welled in his stomach again, giving him more strength. These kids were gaining confidence, but they were still scared of him, he could smell it on their sweat. He pulled upwards against the chains again, pressing his

large teeth against the steel, causing them to creak and screech. The large boy who was holding him down started to struggle, his hands being pulled up off the floor just as Maria fell the rest of the way to the concrete, her brown hair falling out of it's tie and falling over his own leg. That was it.

It hurt, but he willed his jaws together, biting through the chain with a loud clash and a few sparks. He tasted his own blood in his mouth as he spat out a few broken teeth, grabbing the chain that was still around his neck. He pulled the chain forward, grabbing the hispanic boy by the shirt and throwing him over his shoulder, right into his precious little lady. He got to his feet again and grabbed the hand holding the small gun, bearing down on the red-haired boy with his teeth, sinking them deep into the forearm as the gun went off again, sending a bullet right through his gut. He grunted at the pain, but continued on with the motion, twisting his head almost completely around, wrenching the arm right out of it's socket. The boy screamed and dropped the gun as Pennywise tossed him aside as well, hearing a small crash as he slammed into the tower of his victims belongings, sending toys, bags, and other possessions falling to the floor.

"Wake up, for fucks sake, Wake UP!" He heard the high pitched, panicked voice of that Patricia girl. He turned towards her and saw her kneeling next to Maria, shaking her shoulder with one hand. Pennywise hunched his back slightly and moved towards the two girls, letting his teeth tear through part of his cheek, long claws ripping through his gloves as he let a deep growl emanate from his throat. She was small enough to swallow whole, if he wanted to. He continued forward, Patricia looking up and shaking like a leaf at the sight. He had been going easy on the kids, wanting to simply satisfy their mission and go to sleep, like they had planned. But now, Maria was hurt. And THEY had caused it. He would NOT let them go unpunished for that.

Pennywise got within a few feet of Patricia before she stopped trying to rouse Maria and started to back away, holding the bat out in front of her, as if it would give her some semblance of protection against this beast. He continued to stalk her, however, stepping over Maria's unconscious form, looking down for a moment at her face, pale and peaceful, like it had been back in the hospital, all those months ago.

The smell of her blood was filling the cavern, making him almost nauseous, the floor slowly becoming more and more red with each moment that passed.

"Stay away!" Patricia screamed at him, catching his attention again. He stared at her with a solid look, anger and sorrow mixing in his mind and heart as he wondered if this really was the last time he would see this beautiful, unique woman. He continued forward, standing straighter and taller, letting his form grow to loom over this little woman.

"I TOLD you to give up." He said, his voice both deep and high, a crossing of creature and human. "I told you to leave me be, and I would leave you. You persisted, even after what happened to David."

He reached one clawed hand outwards, ignoring the bat that seemed to have been frozen in place. Long, rough fingers wrapped around her scrawny neck, his thumb pressing lightly against her trachea as he threatened to strangle her. Her blue eyes went wide, her face pale, the fear mixing with the blood in the air. He heard the jingle of the chain and whipped his other arm out, grasping Mateo by the wrist and lifting him up off the floor with one hand. Mateo stared at this creature, all of his injuries seeming to have closed in the brief time between the beating and now. He looked around, seeing Charlie getting up off the floor, holding on to his dislocated arm, with Britney helping him up. Maria was still on the floor, but...she was moving. Using her one good arm to push herself into a somewhat sitting position she turned and looked at him, her eyes still hazy from the loss of blood.

He looked at the four other people, smelling their growing fear as he overpowered them so easily, even after having been beaten so heavily. He could see it in their eyes now, they were looking for an escape. No longer did they wish to kill him, no matter what, they wanted to live. He thought back to Derry, to the "Losers Club" They had been so connected, so loyal, that he had not been able to sway them with fear, this group....

He watched Maria try to struggle to her feet, the blood still oozing from her shoulder, getting worse now that she was pushing herself. He gritted his teeth and turned his eye to Charlie and Britney, both

getting ready to rush him to help their friends. He made a decision. He had to risk it.

With a flick of his wrists he tossed Mateo and Patricia towards the other two, sending them into one crashing pile of limbs. He heard them cry out, Charlie especially as Mateo landed right on that injured arm. Pennywise didn't wait, he rushed over to Maria and grasped her throat, pulling her onto her back, against his chest, using his other hand to press against her injured shoulder, both restraining her and attempting to stop the bleeding. Her brow furrowed in confusion as she looked up at him.

"What are you-" She started but he hushed her, watching as the group struggled back up to their feet.

"I'm sorry, this is probably going to hurt you..." He muttered softly into her ear, only wanting her to hear it. The group turned back towards him and stopped, seeing him holding Maria captive in their eyes.

"Let her go!" Charlie yelled at him, though his voice was shaking. Pennywise snarled at them, a cruel smile playing on his face.

"No." He said with a deep hiss. "You ignored my warning, so you pay the price. I will take her, and you will leave. You will be free to go and live, and I will go back to sleep. If you refuse, I will take all of you, and go to bed fat and happy..."

He felt Maria turn towards her friends, he could feel all of her emotions, practically read her thoughts. *They're all gonna get themselves killed. Their my friends, they're going to fight for me...* Pennywise hoped she was right. If she was, he could still fake his death and let them all go, but....

"Fine...take her." Patricia was the one to speak, already backing towards the tunnel entrance. Britney and Mateo were already following, Mateo holding Britney close. He felt Maria tense, as his own face fell. Charlie turned to Patricia, a look of utter disbelief on his freckled face.

"Seriously!?" He called to them. "We can't just leave her!"

"Look at her, Charles!" Mateo yelled back at him. "She's half dead already! She's not scared of dieing but I AM! And I'm not gonna lose Brit!"

Britney was clinging to Mateo, looking at Patricia, who was shaking so hard it looked like she would shatter, like glass. Charlie looked back at Maria and Pennywise. *Charlie, you're my best friend, since kindergarden. You wouldn't...*

Pennywise stared at the boy, urging him to remain loyal to this wonderful girl, who had been willing to die to save him, who had come down into these dark tunnels with them, despite objecting to it for so long. He urged for them to show humanity. The moment he saw that boy's foot take a step back, disappointment and anger flooded his being, his arms pulling Maria closer to his body, as he felt her own anger rise.

"I...I'm sorry, Mar.....I'm so sorry..." He muttered towards her as Patricia took his arm and pulled him towards the tunnel. Pennywise watched as they left his hall, listened as their footsteps quickly retreated down the tunnel, moving too quickly to look back. He loosened his grip on Maria and held her in his arms gently, looking down at her with an apologetic look as he felt all of her pain and anger like it was his own.

Her eyes were fluttering again, but even with the blood loss, there was no mistaking the cold, angry look in her eyes as she stared at the tunnel, before going limp in his arms again.

20. Chapter 20

Floating, or Falling?

The room was silent as Pennywise sat there, holding Maria close to his chest. He stared at her for a moment, listening so carefully to the sound of her heart, and watching her chest rise up and down as she breathed. She was alive, but not for long if something wasn't done. He didn't think he would be able to get her to the hospital in time, so he had to do something here, and now. Looking around, he eyed the wagon that had been his cover, his stage, at times, his nest. He sighed and picked her up, carrying her over to the wagon and opening the door. The inside had been all but forgotten over his many years, it was stale and dusty, with what could only be described as an old cot lying in one corner. He did his best to dust it off and remove the dirty bedding before laying her down on it, looking at her pale face while biting his lip.

It goes without saying that he really had no clue on how to treat an injury. He had never cared enough to learn, in the past. His own injuries healed on their own, and very quickly., Maria would take much much longer.

Okay, first I need to stop the bleeding. He thought as he left his wagon to look for some sort of clean-ish cloth. It took much longer than he had liked, but eventually he found a suitcase with some clothes and a First-Aid kit inside. It was hardly enough to really help the situation, but it was more than nothing. He made his way back to Maria's side and started to fold a shirt up to make some sort of pad. He pressed it against her shoulder and looked lifted her up to look at her back. There was a hole there too, so at least the bullet wasn't stuck inside her. He pressed another cloth against the exit wound and simply held her, trying to will the blood to stop seeping. He wandered just how much blood she had already lost, and how much more she needed to lose before being beyond his reach. Using another hand, being very thankful for his shapeshifting abilities, he opened the first aid kit and was happy to see a small book. It was some basic survival first-aid, but maybe it would have something about stopping bleeding.

He flipped through the book, looking at all of the things it covered,

breaks, sprains, snake bites, Deep wounds! It was the best he had. He read over it, getting to the point of stopping the bleeding. So far he was doing good, putting even pressure on the wound, but he needed to lift her feet. He quickly put some bedding under her legs so that they were above her heart, before he continued to read.

If the bleeding persisted, he might have to try to cauterise the wound, especially with the lack of medical supplies he had, and the risk of infection. Making a fire was easy enough, and Maria had her hunting knife on her. He took the blade and stuck it into the fire, hoping he wouldn't need to use it.

While the blade slowly heated up in the fire, he simply sat with her, keeping his eyes on her face and his hands pressed against the wounds, once white gloves having turned red. Her breathing was steady, and the bleeding had definitely slowed down, but it was still seeping through the bandages. The knife, very VERY slowly, got to the point of glowing a bright red. Pennywise checked the wounds, they were still bleeding, and looked around their little room. These wounds would get infected so easily in here, he didn't think he had much of an alternative at this point.

He pulled the bandages away from Maria's shoulder and started to pull off her tank-top and bra. Once her top was bared, he took the knife from the fire and, carefully, pressed it against the entry wound. Her entire body tensed at the pain, and he nearly puked at the smell of burning flesh, but it worked. The bleeding all but stopped as he quickly did the same to the exit wound. It was quick, and while there was still a little bit of blood, it wasn't anything like the gushing it had been before. He tore up some of the cleaner shirts from the suitcase and tied them around her shoulder like bandages. He pulled the cleanest blanket he could find up over her chest and sat back on his heels, looking at her as she rested.

He had no idea if this was enough, but it was all he could do right then. He was too scared to move her, for fear of re-opening her wounds. He looked up at the roof of the wagon, sighing as he felt a wave of fatigue wash over him. It was time for him to sleep, but he couldn't, not until he knew if she was okay. Closing his eyes and taking a deep breath, he stood up, looking at her face and running his fingers through her bangs. She would need to eat when she woke up.

She had been walking for close to ten hours, even before the fight had started. He leaned down and gave her a kiss, shuddering at how cold her lips were. He pulled away and, hesitantly, exited the wagon and started to make his way to the surface.

The four

It took so long to get out of the sewers again, that by the time they were crawling out of the tunnel in the skate park, it was night time again. Mateo held the gate up for the other three as they crawled out, each silent and pale, covered in dirt and muck, with blood on their faces and hands. Charlie sat down on the wet grassy hill that lead down into the irrigation ditch, staring into the tunnel with a blank look in his eyes and a cold shadow in his heart.

"What do we do now?" Britney asked, leaning against Mateo's shoulder. The two of them sat down next to Charlie, with Patricia looking away from them with her head bowed. They were alive, which is what they had wanted, but Maria was gone. Charlie had certainly taken it the hardest, the guilt building up in his chest the entire walk back up. Maria, his best friend, the girl who had saved his ass on a couple of occasions, and he had just let her go. He had just let that THING have her, to save his own skin. What worst sort of betrayal was there?

Even so he looked at Patricia, at her slumped shoulders, her once shiny blonde hair looking dull in the evening light. She had always been so proud about how she looked after her friends, about how LOYAL she was. It was all a lie. Sure, she would help out her friends, until her own skin was at risk. Until it was a choice between herself and the people she thought were lesser. He was angry at her, and at Britney and Mateo, but mostly at himself. He had let her die because he was too weak to fight IT. Because they were all too weak.

Mateo looked up at the sky, dark clouds obscuring the moon. He had been so scared, he didn't want to die. He didn't want to lose Britney. He liked Maria, and had been grateful for everything she had done for him, but....he wasn't going to give up their lives for her....

He wrapped his arms around Britney, rubbing her shoulders as she started to cry. She had become so attached to Maria over the last

several months, hell even before that she had been fond of the girl. He felt so guilty for hurting his Britney like this, but he would rather see her sad and alive, than dead. He buried his face in her curly hair and just hugged her tightly. How do you move on from something like this? How are you able to look forward?

Patricia took in a deep breath, hearing Britney's sobs behind her. She felt guilty, yeah, but she didn't think she should feel bad for wanting to survive. It had been right. IT had given them an option before, and they had ignored it, and look what had happened. Maria got hurt because a bullet went THROUGH the damn thing. They had beaten IT with all they had, and it just got up and tossed them aside. To ignore it's offer again would have been nothing short of suicide. She looked over her shoulder at the rest of the group and walked toward them, regret and resolution having a war in her mind. She could not regret living, but she could regret the cost. She knelt down in front of her friends, blue eyes solid as she caught their attention.

"We won't let this be in vain." She said softly, her own words sounding hollow in her ears. "We're too weak to fight it right now, but we know when It'll come back. And We will be ready when it does. We'll be older and more prepared. And then we will show IT not to mess with us."

The three of them looked at Patricia, small, frail, frilly Patricia, and nodded, almost in unison. They would have Twenty-Seven years to get prepared for the next encounter, to plan. They would not let it over-power them again. They would be ready when it woke up. For Maria.

The Cavern

The room was warm. Uncomfortably warm. Maria opened her eyes to see old wood above her, with cracked paint. She turned her head and wrinkled her nose at the smell, old and musty. There was, what looked like, the remains of a small fire, with her hunting knife still sitting inside the blackened ashes. She sat up to look around, just to feel a sharp pain in her shoulder. She looked at it, it was bandaged, poorly, by some torn up clothing. Her shirt was gone.

She looked around the small room for a moment before seeing the

half-open suitcase. She reached over to it and pulled out a men's button up shirt. She slipped it on and buttoned up the first couple of buttons, just enough to keep it closed, before trying to stand up. Her feet were wobbly, and she was horribly dizzy, but she was able to stand. Using the walls for support she made her way to the small door and pushed it open. She was still in the hall. She took a step down, careful of her step on the pile of children's toys under her feet as she turned and looked at the wagon, and the caricature painting of Pennywise on the stage door. She looked around the room, finally able to take in the full sight of it all.

The room was at least fifty feet tall, with a single hole in the ceiling, allowing the moon to shine in through a grate. Dark silhouettes passed in front of the moon light, causing shadows to fall over her pale face, as she watched the dozens and dozens of bodies circle the slowly growing tower of belongings. She managed to pick out the headless body of David amongst them, floating low in the mass. There was an odd beauty to the scene, a fluid coherence to it all, becoming entranced.

She should be among them, technically. She felt the anger start to boil into her stomach like a burning heat in her stomach, replacing the deadly cold that had settled there before. She looked away from the sight of the floating bodies, down at the pile of belongings at her feet. She bent down and picked up a small trinket, a doll that had been tossed into the pile. She looked it over, with it's plastic face and painted blue eyes, once straight blonde hair a tangled knot on the top of it's head. She clenched her teeth together and hurled the doll towards the wall, instantly regretting the motion as pain pierced through her arm and chest. She clenched at it and fell to her knees, hissing in a breath through her teeth.

"F....FUCK!" Maria let out a loud scream of anger and frustration, clenching her eyes shut as she fought back angry tears. She was alone, but that hardly mattered. She wanted to scream all of her frustrations out.

"You fucking bastards!" She cried out into the hall, her voice echoing back at her. "You're the ones who dragged me down here! I told you to leave him alone! Why the fuck couldn't you just listen to me!? Why did you leave me down here!? Why did you fucking abandon me!?"

She clasped one hand over her eyes, deep sobs swelling into her chest. She knew she wasn't in any real danger down here, she had no fear of Pennywise but....they didn't know that. They left fully believing that she would die down there, a horrible death of being eaten by something none of them could really understand. Reality meant nothing, in that moment, to Maria. What could have happened to her, by all rights what SHOULD have happened to her, was what she was condemned to!

Her screaming sobs echoed through the cavern so loudly, she did not hear the footsteps coming up from behind her, nor was she conscious of the tender hand on her back for a few moments. She choked in her sobs and turned to look at the white face, streaked with red, looking way to sad to be a clown.

She looked at him for a moment, her eyes locked with his. No words needed to be said between them. The sorrow, pain, and guilt were all palpable to the two of them. He was sorry for their responses, and she was sorry for putting him in that situation to begin with. She leaned over and simply rested her head against his chest, his hands instantly coming up to wrap around her. That warmth was so comforting, in that cold cavern. Even though the ice in her stomach remained there, she felt the safety and promise of those arms, like a blanket, enveloping her.

She might have fallen asleep, for all she knew. Losing consciousness of time and surrounding was a bizarre experience for her. But what ever had happened, and however much time had passed, she was still sitting in his arms in the middle of the room, staring up at the floating forms above her head, the shadows seeming to dance around the silent room. She relaxed now, the pain in her arm still there, but having eased slightly in his warmth. It was a few more moments of silent calmness before she noticed the new smell in the room. A smell that made her stomach make a funny noise.

She frowned slightly and turned her head to look beside Pennywise, and stared at the brown bag for a moment. She pressed her lips together and let out a small, very unlady-like snort, causing Pennywise to tilt his head at her.

"Are you okay?" He asked and she nodded, her laughter coming in

small huffs and snorts before progressing to a full giggle. He looked at her, confused, then looking back at the bag of food he had gotten for her. He really didn't get it?

"I appreciate the thought Penny, "She said, sitting up and grabbing the bag. "But you could have gone to Sonic, Burger King, Taco-Bell....or do you just love the irony of it?" She asked, turning the bright yellow M towards him. He stared at her for a moment before a look of realisation struck him and he covered his face with one hand, his shoulders shaking in a giggle, causing the frilled collar to bounce and small bells to jingle.

"Honestly, I didn't even think about it." He said, his face looking very young with his buck teeth poking through his big smile. The two of them giggled together for a moment before making their way to their feet, Pennywise holding onto her hand to give her support before leading her back into the wagon.

They both took a seat on the bed as Maria opened the bag of food and instantly took one fry out and popped it into her mouth. She was amazed at how hungry she was, and somehow, greasy fried food tasted amazing in that moment. She took a few more bites before Pennywise held up one large cup of soda. She took it and took a big gulp of Cola before setting it down on the floor and pulling out the burger, starting in on it.

Maria snuck a glance at Pennywise and felt herself blush slightly. He was just sitting there, watching her eat like a pig. She swallowed her bite and wiped off her mouth, having to flip her hair away from her face again, wondering where her ponytail had gone. She felt his hand touch her hair, pushing it back behind her ear as she looked back at him, setting her burger on her lap as she smiled at him.

"Are you okay? Does it hurt?" He asked, motioning to her shoulder with gentle eyes that seemed oddly right in that face. She looked at her shoulder, badly bandaged as it was, it was sufficient enough. She gave a small, careful, shrug and took another bite of her sandwich.

"It twinges, but I've had worse....I think." She said, stopping to think for a moment. Well she had never been shot before but....no actually this was probably the worst thing that has happened. She shook her

head and popped the last few bites of beef patty into her mouth before taking another sip of soda and starting back on her fries. As she reached into the bag to grab one, her hand hit a small, think piece of paper. She pulled it out and looked at the receipt before frowning and looking at Pennywise.

"So...who out there is missing their lunch?" She asked with a wry smile. He rolled his eyes, a little too much, actually, and sighed.

"I actually bought it, believe it or not." He said with an exaggerated pout. She looked at him with a somewhat funny, shocked look on her face.

"You have money?" She asked and he chuckled shaking his head.

"They did." He said, nodding his head upwards, obviously referring to the floaters. "Plenty of purses and wallets in this pile. And they're not gonna use it."

Maria thought for a moment before shrugging and biting another fry. *Can't really argue with that logic.*

She finished her food in no time at all, she was actually probably gonna get a stomach ache for it later, now that she thought about it. But, in that moment, as she crumpled up the bag and placed it beside the cup of ice, she was full and sleepy. She leaned her head against Pennywise and thought about that for a moment before looking at him. His eyes were tired, even if they did look at her with such soft fondness.

"Why aren't you asleep, Penny?" She asked with a gentle sigh. "I thought the whole point of this was to let you rest?"

He looked at her for a moment before pushing her hair back over her shoulder, letting him see the edge of the bandage through the collar of the shirt. He didn't have to say anything, she understood. Everything changed when she got hurt. She placed her hand on his face and pulled him forward to kiss him, only for him to grab her hand, and pull away, standing up and moving to the other side of the room.

He was thinking about something seriously, it was so clear to see, even from behind. She watched him for a moment before standing up and moving towards him, wrapping her arms around his slender waist and pressing her cheek against his back. He stood there, in her arms, thinking for a long time before turning and placing his hand on her own cheek and leaning down to finally give her that kiss.

She leaned into the kiss, pressing her hands against his chest as that small hint of the heat that he had taken away returned to her. She felt a deep, profound comfort in his kiss, something that, to her, felt more solid than the ground beneath her feet. Speaking of which....

Maria let out a surprised yipe when Pennywise picked her up in his arms, never taking his mouth off of hers as he held her bridal style. She looked at him for a second before continuing to kiss him back, wrapping her arms around him to help keep balanced. He just stood there, for a while, holding her close to his chest while they kissed. Maria thought this would last forever, it certainly felt like it would, but logic demanded that it all would end.

After this, Pennywise would still need to go to sleep, and she would be left to handle twenty-Seven years without him. She could do it, she had no doubts about that. But it would suck majorly, and she doubted she could just go back up to the surface now, considering her so called "Friends" now thought she was monster chow.

She pulled away from the kiss to take a breath and ended up letting out a sigh, resting her head on that satiny shoulder that had been so sturdy, even through all of this crap. Pennywise nuzzled her hair gently as he made his way back over to the bed, laying her down in it and sliding in next to her. He pulled the covers up to her waist and just layed there, petting her hair absently. Maria looked at him, at his eyes, to see if he was still thinking or not. Something was still on his mind, clearly, but she didn't know if she really wanted to ask about it or not. Right now, everything felt weird and she just kind of wanted to sit in her comfortable position for a while.

But, of course, that wasn't meant to happen now was it? It took a while, but eventually Pennywise spoke what was on his mind, his voice soft and gentle.

"Maria...do you want to stay with me?" He asked, looking at her with worried eyes. Maria furrowed her brow in confusion for a moment before turning and sitting up on her elbow to look at him straighter. *Was that a serious question?*

"You really have to ask that?" She asked, her voice equally as soft. "I mean, yeah. What exactly do I have that's worth going back up there for? I would love to stay with you, but sadly, human's don't have a natural twenty-seven year hibernation." Pennywise gave a small cackle and nodded, his fingers now twirling the ends of her hair.

"I know...but...I've been thinking." He said, nervousness creeping into his voice. "I may be able to...I don't know...put you in a stasis? Using the Dead Lights..."

Maria frowned at him again and thought back to David. To that bright light she had seen through closed eyes, the ones he had used to kill him. How would that....?

"Don't...those kill people?" She asked, hesitantly. He shook his head and took a breath, clearly thinking of how to explain things.

"The Dead Lights are...well, their me. My truest form, in a sense. I can use them to feed on people's fear and, obviously I don't just eat them whole when I kill them..." He motioned to the floaters. "I use the lights to slowly feed while asleep. By the time I wake up, there will be nothing left of them. But, when I use them on someone without killing them...it acts sort of like a trance, a deep sleep. Normally it would play off of fears but..you can't be afraid of anything. And since it, sort of , preserves the bodies for me to feed, it should do the same for you. I just...I've never actually tested that before, never wanted to. So....there are risks..."

Maria stared at him with wide eyes for a second before blinking and shaking her head. *What the...what?*

"Penny....that makes no fucking sense." She said plainly, causing him to laugh loudly, shrugging.

"Honestly, none of it makes sense." He said plainly. "If I told you where I come from and the fact that my biggest enemy is a Turtle, it

would get a million times more confusing."

Maria blinked again.

"A Tur-no. You know what, I don't want to know. It makes no sense." She shook her head and he shrugged again. Maria thought for a little while, looking up at Pennywise again. His golden eyes were a mixture of emotions that she could not even start to read, a light glowing inside of them promised her that heat again. The feeling of being alive. She wandered, now, if that heat was the lights? Was that why he was always so warm? Because he was, in truth, nothing but pure light made sentient? She looked up at the ceiling of the wagon, thinking of the floating bodies dancing in the moonlight that very moment. None of them had decayed at all, not even the ones that went missing in the early summer.

She thought of the surface. Her schooling to become a doctor, did that really matter at this point? By all rights, she was just another person to have vanished. Her group believed she was dead, if she just showed back up there, she would have to face that. Her father probably wouldn't even realise her absence until a year has passed....What DID she have, worth going back to? Her friends abandoned her, and she stopped caring about school and career months ago. She looked at Pennywise again, that strange face, so young with old eyes, bright red lips that crawled up a pure-white face. Those silly buck teeth that most would consider unattractive. This creature, this MAN, was something that feasted on the fear and flesh of humans. It was older than she could imagine, and had the power to rip her to shreds without so much as blinking one yellow eye. And he had been more solid, more loyal, than her own people.

He was worth taking a risk.

She reached her hand up and stroked his cheek, watching as his face turned into her palm to place a small kiss. A gentle monster. She smiled at him and gave him a gentle kiss. He looked at her, eyes still solid, as he kissed her back, clearly still attempting to read her. She simply smiled.

"I'll take that risk." She said softly, pulling him closer. He complied and rolled on top of her, bracing himself on his long arms to keep his

weight off.

"Are you sure?" He asked, using one hand to stroke her cheek and neck gently. "You could end up dead, or worse...."

"I'm sure." She said softly, trying to pull him even closer, despite her shoulder protesting. "To me it's worth that risk. And besides. If I die in it, it means it nourishes you, right? I'm more than okay with that."

Pennywise smiled again and leaned down to kiss Maria, being very careful not to lean on her arm at all. Maria smiled and pulled him in closer, wanting to take in all of the heat he had to offer. She was sad when he pulled away and rolled off of her, settling down into the bed at her side. She sighed and pouted in frustration, causing Pennywise to laugh.

"Once you're healed up." He said, through a small yawn. "I'll make love to you before we go to sleep."

Maria turned to him and snuggled against his chest, feeling her eyes become heavy. As frustrating as it was, she knew she needed to heal up before doing anything that involves energy. She took another look at Pennywise and saw just how tired he looked, himself.

"Will you be okay? Waiting that long?" She asked, her fingers clenching the fabric on his chest. His arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her against his side, acting like the perfect blanket to keep her warm in this dark cave.

"I'll survive." He said softly. "I'll be tired, but it won't be the first time I've had to go to sleep a little late. Don't you worry about it. Just rest."

She smiled at him and took him at his word, closing her eyes and falling into a very deep sleep.

Two weeks

It turns out that bullet wounds take a while to heal, especially without proper medical equipment. Each day that passed for the two lovers under the city was both improving and becoming harder. As Maria regained strength, Pennywise became more and more tired, but

he refused to let it change how he was towards his beloved.

Every day he would go to the surface and bring her the things she needed, food, clean water, clothes that FIT, clean bandages with ointments, etc. And while he was away, Maria wasn't just sitting on her ass. She was, believe it or not, attempting to clean this place. She was determined to have a talk with Pennywise about his hoarding habits, but frankly, having all of this random crap has been somewhat useful. Clothing, money, books and even a nintendo game thing, Maria wasn't sure which one, but it worked! Maria found an old CD player that ran on batteries and was able to pull a few, non-damaged disks out of the rubble to put some sound into the quiet hall.

The wagon wasn't too hard to clean out, most of it was dust and neglect, rather than actual filth. And the water that did run into this cavern was mostly rain water, as the sewer tunnels that actually work had been sealed off from this place.

To the naked eye, the place still looked like a sty, but Maria was able to see the difference, and that was all that really mattered. She no longer felt like she was going to get a staph infection from being in there. And Pennywise had gone above and beyond in terms of providing her with human amenities. The hardest part was bathing. She actually had to get water and boil it in order to get clean! A long, arduous process that made her appreciate the fact that she used to have a shower.

Still, the time under the city wasn't too bad, overall. Her biggest worry was for Pennywise himself. She had caught him swaying on more than one occasion. It was horribly sad, to see her strong beast looking so tired and weak. At one time she had told him that he could forget her and sleep, before he got seriously hurt. He refused and just continued along.

And so she did all she could make it easier on him, asking for very little, and never letting him leave the cave unnecessarily. When he was there, she made him sit and rest while she took care of things, especially as her shoulder healed up more and more. Every night, when Maria was going to sleep, Pennywise would lay with her, holding her closely as he himself fought off sleep. When she asked

him if he could, like, take some sort of equivalent to a power nap, he explained that to rest, he dropped his form, which apparently made things even MORE complicated.

Every morning, when Pennywise would return with her breakfast, he would often bring with him the new Daily Sun. She would flip through the pages of the paper to get an idea on what was happening up in Flagstaff. Apparently she was now, officially, a missing person. Her face was on the paper, along with the newest reports on what was happening.

Apparently, now that the disappearances have stopped, so it seemed, the police were starting to wonder if it was over. If Maria was the last victim of the kidnapper/killer. By the end of the second week, the newspaper was officially calling him "The Reigns Killer" named after his last victim. How cute. Apparently the number one suspect was David Greene, who, apparently, had been stalking Maria for months, if not a couple of years. Creepy.

It was the end of November now, and snow had started to fall into their little cavern through the vent grate. Maria was no longer as risk of bleeding or infection, and frankly had gotten as strong as she could. Pennywise, was reaching his limit. The two of them were sitting on the pile of belongings together, just looking up at the snowflakes falling in on them, Pennywise keeping an arm around Maria to keep her warm. He eyes had deep bags under them, the glow was less bright. Maria looked at him, thinking of how his skin matched the snow before turning to him and giving him a gentle kiss. He kissed her back and looked at her, his hand sliding up her arm gently with a tired smile. She put both of her hands on his face and smiled at him.

"You need to sleep." She said softly. He stared at her for a few moments before nodding, his hand gently brushing over the scarring wound on her shoulder. He looked over her, for a few moments, and Maria couldn't help but feel self conscious. She was wearing a dress. She didn't have many options, in terms of clothes, so she put on what was clean, a brown and white halter top dress with an oddly poofy skirt. One of those cotton summer dresses. His eyes skimming over her made her all too aware of her unusual style of dress in that moment.

His hand slid up and down her arm again, his tired eyes roaming over her form as one hand pushed her hair back away from her neck and shoulders. He leaned forward and kissed her gently, his lips pressing firmly against her own. She tilted her head into the kiss, her hands starting to slide up his arms as she shifted up onto her knees. She felt his tongue gently flick against her lips, and she opened them to grant him entrance. It wasn't the forceful, passionate intrusion she had once been used to, it was soft and gentle, a careful exploration of her mouth as she pressed against his chest, tilting her head up more to not lose contact. His hands slid down her waist and pulled her flush up against his body before starting to lean forward.

Luckily they were at the bottom of the mountain of object, so that when he laid her back she was on the smooth ground, not on top of someone's shoe. He sat up, straddling her legs as he looked down at her. Maria looked up at him, her face flushed, lips swollen from the kiss as she watched his eyes roam over her. Her eyes did the same to him, taking in the oddly attractive shape of his slender form on top of her own. Almost at the same time their hands started to roam over each other, starting at their face and neck, and gliding down their chests. Maria took in deep sighing breaths as his hands roamed over her breasts, extra sensitive in the cold room, and he did the same when her hands reached his hips and thighs.

The stroking lasted a while, a gentle exploration and memorization of the other's body. Maria was the first one to advance, pulling on Pennywise's top to loosen it from the trousers. He had apparently learned, from the past, that she like to undress him, as now there were actually fastens on his suit that she was able to pop open with her fingers. She started up, under the collar and worked her way down, slowly exposing a human like chest, the color of snow. Once it was bared she slid her hands up it again, sitting up slightly as Pennywise pulled at the tie at the back of her neck. She felt her top loosen and looked at his face as he pulled it down to her hips, exposing her the same way she had exposed him.

His hands slid up and down her waist as he leaned down to take one breast into his mouth, kissing and licking it very gently as he started to shift out of the rest of his clothing. Maria leaned back into the floor and closed her eyes, opting to enjoy his touches for a while

while the heat between her legs grew.

He continued to caress her body, even as one hand reached up beneath the skirt to pull away her panties, shifting his legs so that he was between hers. His body naturally lifted her skirt up, and she could feel his desire pressing against her. He body rocked against him gently, her hands working to pull off the rest of his top as he kissed and sucked on her neck.

Neither one of them rushed. For the longest time they simply enjoyed touching and kissing each other's body, their sexes pressed against each other in a promise of connection that had no need to be forced into. It was natural, when it did happen, both of their bodies acting on their own accord, in perfect unison with each other. Her legs opened ever so slightly more as he pushed forward, slowly and gently, both of them letting out a soft sigh at the connection.

He didn't stop, but he didn't rush either. His movements were gentle rocks, reaching a new depth inside her, while still being the slowest, most gentle time they had ever shared. Her hips rocked back against him, the timing perfect to reach the maximum depth as they kissed each other in earnest love.

Maria relaxed in his embrace, and he in hers, as they made love, body's moving slowly and almost silently, their soft gasps and moans echoing in the cave. Maria knew that, whenever she did wake up, it wouldn't be long before he had her bent over for a very primal, carnal session again, or she would be straddling him and taking control, but what they were doing in that moment was more than just sex. It was a promise.

I'll never leave you behind. She could feel those words with her entire body as he pulled her upwards, letting her sit up as he rocked against her. She looked at him, now having to bend her neck down as he kissed her collarbone. She rocked her hips forward, still slow and steady, relishing the heat that was returning to her core. Perhaps, in the end, this was all wrong. She accepted his ways of living, the world of blood and death he dwelled in, and she had no qualms about it. No regrets. And he accepted her, strange eyes, inability to fear, lack of empathy towards others, all of her without so much as a hint of hesitation.

I'll never let anyone say that this is wrong. She thought to herself as she heard the deep growl emanating from his chest, the bestial side of him starting to peek through the hazy mist they were creating in their own minds. She felt his hands clench around her as he pushed in just the slightest bit harder, a tiny bit quicker, as his instincts started to take over, getting close to his climax.

She leaned back again, letting him continue to hold her up as she arched her back, letting her entire front be exposed to him. Her hands held onto his elbows as she let him take control the rest of the way, her trust in him never faltering. She felt his tongue slide from her navel up her torso, between her breasts and resting to place gentle butterfly kisses along her neck as he rocked forward more, reaching in as deep as he possibly could without causing pain or discomfort.

The near explosion of heat that filled her body as he climaxed sent her over the edge, not even a full second after him. Their shuddering gasps mixed together in the symphony of echoes they had been creating, body's still rocking gently even as they layed back onto the floor, Pennywise keeping his hand behind her head to keep her safe.

They were winded, but not like they had been in the past, were it was like they had run twenty miles. They were fully conscious of each other and their surroundings, even the dark cavern seemed light to their eyes now. Maria could feel that heat that had been taken away, finally returned, her senses were heightened again as she relaxed under his weight.

They smiled softly at each other for a short while before Pennywise started to pull her dress back into place, soft respectful hands simply doing what, they thought, should be done in that moment. Maria let him, bringing her hand up to pass through the mess of red hair on top of his head. His tiredness was becoming visible again, and she knew now was the time. They had reconnected in the deepest way possible, and now she would put her life in his hands, again.

Once she was dressed again he stood up and held his hands out to her. He took them and was pulled to her feet into a tight embrace, long arms wrapped around her waist as he looked at her with a tired smile. She smiled back and hugged him before she asked.

"How is this gonna work?" her voice was strong and determined, no hesitation or fear within. His smile grew.

"Just don't look away." He said softly, brushing her hair back again. She nodded and looked straight at him as he leaned in to kiss her one more time. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him back, her own promise.

I won't leave you, Pennywise. I'll see you when you wake.

As he pulled away he took a deep breath and she saw a hint of what his true form was. The face she had come to love started to split, right up those lines that crawled up his cheeks. The sight of it was something, truly horrible, but her trust for him was stronger than her shock, and she continued to watch as a maw opened before her. What had once been dozens of teeth were revealed to be hundreds, reaching all the way to the back of his throat, where she could see three orbs of light that seemed to be moving as one. She looked at those lights and she listened. She could hear his voice there, soft and comforting as the light took up all over vision, even obscuring the teeth. She felt the light swallow her, taking her mind to a place where she was surrounded by that warmth she had come to find so comforting. He had warned her of a place of fear and turmoil, but this, this was just him. And she was happy to float amongst that light.

Pennywise watched as Maria's eyes became glazed with a soft yellow light, a small smile on her face as her body became weightless in his arms. He could feel her consciousness connect with his own and he let himself smile. He knew she would be okay. He closed his mouth, letting the clown face return to where it was and looked down at Maria. She was asleep, her feet already floating slightly off the floor, only being held in place by his arms. He nuzzled her cheek and gave her a small kiss before letting her float up into the air, a good twenty feet, just below the real floaters.

"Don't worry Maria. When you wake, I won't let you fall." He muttered to the empty room. He sighed and turned away from her, moving towards the tunnel that would take him to the deepest part of the sewers. He hopped onto the edge of the pipe and turned to look at Maria again, her hair bobbing slightly in a nonexistent breeze, almost as if she was in water. A small prick of worry still played at

the back of his mind, worry about how this would affect her, but the decision was made and it was done.

He turned back towards the tunnel and reveled in the irony of the situation. All of his victims, even Maria, had to float, were as he had to fall to sleep. He crouched down and swung himself down, claspings onto the wall as he started to make his way down, already letting his form shift into it's truest nature, were he would remain, for Twenty-Seven Years.

-End; Book 1

Author's thanks/explanations; Thank you to all of you who have supported me on this ride! When I started this I never expected to finish it so quickly! All of your support and reviews have meant so much to me! Now, I know some of you may be a bit upset with what I did with the Dead Lights, but in my defense, Stephen King never did a really good job at explaining them or what they can do, and the new movie, with the floating kids, just made more questions, so I went with a theory of mine that worked for the story. And yes, I do plan on making a Book 2, once I have had a small break from this story world! I hope some of you will join me on that ride as well! Again, thank you all so much, and I hope you continue to enjoy!